MARVEL

THE ULTIMATES

ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE

CAMP
FRIGERI
ALLEN
BLEE

"Entertains and exhilarates."
- MAJOR SPOILERS

"Offers fresh perspectives and exciting possibilities."
- THE COMIC BOOK DISPATCH

"Deniz Camp continues to impress with his storytelling."
- NERD INITIATIVE

THE ULTIMATES LAUNCH THEIR BOLD, NEW PLAN TO CHANGE THE WORLD!

Following recent explosive events and the loss of a teammate, the Ultimates regroup in their secret HQ — but are they ready to meet the galactic travelers from a far-flung, Maker-free future known as the Guardians of the Galaxy? America Chavez is caught right in the middle, but where will her loyalties lie? Then it's time to meet Ultimate Luke Cage, who has been quietly sabotaging the Maker's Council from behind bars! And when Captain America and the Human Torch lead a team to find their old comrade Namor, they'll have to get through the Red Skull Gang first! But when the time comes to remove Loki from his seat of power in Asgard, Thor and Sif journey into mystery for blood, glory and rebellion — but discover a surprising new ally!

COLLECTING **ULTIMATES (2024) #7-12** AND MATERIAL FROM **ULTIMATE UNIVERSE: ONE YEAR IN #1** — BY **DENIZ CAMP**, **JUAN FRIGERI**, **CHRIS ALLEN**, **JONAS SCHARF**, **FEDERICO BLEE** AND **MATTIA IACONO**.

T+ MARVEL

A diabolical genius known as **THE MAKER** used time travel to create his ideal Earth by systematically preventing anyone from ever becoming a super hero and by establishing a secret council of super villains, **THE MAKER'S COUNCIL**, that rules the world from the shadows.

But now the Maker is gone, locked away for the next twelve months by inventor **HOWARD STARK**. Howard's teenage son, **TONY**, took on the codename **IRON LAD** and began recruiting a network of heroes to fight back against the Maker's Council and prepare for the Maker's return — but not without consequences. To retaliate, the Council framed Tony for an attack on New York City that killed thousands.

On a recent mission, the **ULTIMATES** were ambushed by Council member the **HULK**. They suffered a brutal defeat, but **DOOM** was able to rescue them by using the forbidden **IMMORTUS ENGINE**. Help arrived too late, though, as **SHE-HULK** made the devastating declaration that Iron Lad was dead...

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ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE

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THE ULTIMATES

CAST:

IRON LAD
TONY STARK

DOOM
REED RICHARDS

CAPTAIN AMERICA
STEVE ROGERS

HAWKEYE
CHARLI RAMSEY

THOR
GOD OF THUNDER

SIF
WARRIOR GODDESS

SHE-HULK
LEJORI JOENA ZAKARIA

GIANT-MAN
HANK PYM

WASP
JANET VAN DYNE

AMERICA CHAVEZ
COSMIC POWERHOUSE

THE HUMAN TORCH
JIM HAMMOND

DECEMBER 2024

ULTIMATE
UNIVERSE
1
ONE
YEAR
IN

THE WORLD

FORMER NORTH AMERICAN UNION
REDISTRIBUTED TO EUROPEAN COALITION,
SOCIETY OF SOUTH AMERICA & CHILDREN OF ETERNAL LIGHT
THE SOCIETY OF SOUTH AMERICA
EMMANUEL DA COSTA & THE HELLFIRE CLUB
THE EUROPEAN COALITION
CAPTAIN BRITAIN
THE CITY
THE MAKER
THE EURASIAN REPUBLIC
MAGIK, COLOSSUS & OMEGA RED
HI NO KUNI ("LAND OF THE SUN")
SUNFIRE, VIPER & SILVER SAMURAI
THE CHILDREN OF ETERNAL LIGHT
THE HULK
THE UPPER AND LOWER KINGDOMS
RA & KHONSHU
SEATS OF POWER
LESSER TERRITORIES

THE WORLD

AS REMADE BY THE MAKER'S COUNCIL

- ~~THE NORTH AMERICAN UNION~~ REDISTRIBUTED
- ~~REGIONAL SUBSIDIARIES~~ REDISTRIBUTED

- THE SOCIETY OF SOUTH AMERICA
- REGIONAL CLUBS
- FRACTIONAL CULTURES

- THE EUROPEAN COALITION
- REGIONAL GOVERNORS
- FIEFDOMS

- THE CITY
- LATVERIAN TERRITORIES

- THE UPPER AND LOWER KINGDOMS
- REGIONAL DYNASTIES
- LOCAL TEMPLES

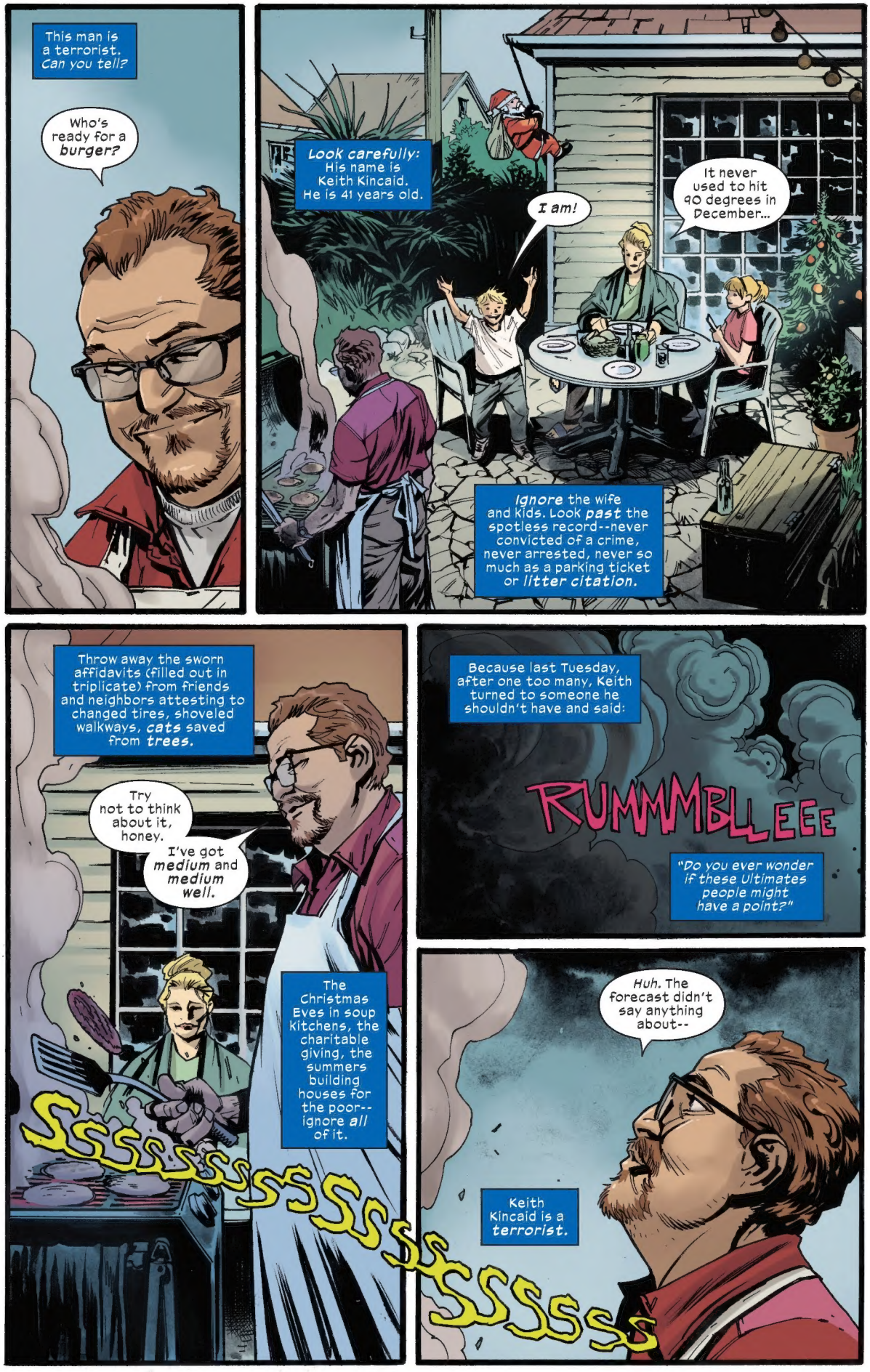
- THE EURASIAN REPUBLIC
- REGIONAL DIRECTORS
- LOCAL SCHOOLS

- THE CHILDREN OF ETERNAL LIGHT
- THE SHADOWS OF THE IMMORTAL HAND

- HI NO KUNI ("LAND OF THE SUN")
- DAIMYOS

- WAKANDA

1963-2024


This man is a terrorist. *Can you tell?*
Who's ready for a ***burger?***
Look carefully: His name is Keith Kincaid. He is 41 years old.
I am!
It never used to hit 90 degrees in December...
Ignore the wife and kids. Look ***past*** the spotless record--never convicted of a crime, never arrested, never so much as a parking ticket or ***litter citation.***
Throw away the sworn affidavits (filled out in triplicate) from friends and neighbors attesting to changed tires, shoveled walkways, ***cats*** saved from ***trees.***
Try not to think about it, honey.
I've got ***medium*** and ***medium well.***
The Christmas Eves in soup kitchens, the charitable giving, the summers building houses for the poor--ignore ***all*** of it.
SSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS
Because last Tuesday, after one too many, Keith turned to someone he shouldn't have and said:
RUMMMBLLEEE
"Do you ever wonder if these Ultimates people might have a point?"
Huh. The forecast didn't say anything about--
Keith Kincaid is a ***terrorist.***

ZZZRRTTT
Dad!!!
Keith!
Daddy!
SSSSSSSSSS
And we do not tolerate terrorists.
Direct hit, sir. Target is medium well.
Nice work, agent. You throw a mean lightning bolt.

Ahh, the targeting system does most of the work. But thank you, sir.
"We" are H.A.N.D., Heroic Anomaly Neutralization Directorate.
This is the Beast, flagship "Cumulo-Carrier" of the H.A.N.D. Heli-fleet. From here H.A.N.D. predicts, and preemptively eliminates, threats to global order.
The Beast is powered by a thermonuclear core and equipped with some of the most sophisticated surveillance technology on the planet.
Disguised as a permanent, mile-wide thunderstorm, we can microtarget budding terrorists like Keith in Tallahassee while listening to high schoolers accidentally implicate their parents in Pittsburgh.
In other words, we can do pretty much whatever we want.

H.A.N.D. agents are now crawling like shadows across every inch of Keith Kincaid's home and office, looking for terrorist links-- a *Super-Suit*, a *holographic message*, a StarkTech *catalyst container box*.
What has Inspection turned up?
They won't find anything. There's nothing to find.
Nothing so far. But the *Evidence Factory* is already on it.
Excellent. Make sure the boys in *Narrative* come up with something too.
Yes, sir.
None of that artsy crap either. Something with *broad appeal*.
Yes, sir.
But today we have an *audience*. So I've got to make it look *good*.
Another day making the world safe.
My name is Nick Fury, Director of H.A.N.D. And this is my *last confession*.

Of course, the kind of people I work with, I can't actually write it down. Can't take the chance someone might find it *early*.
Sir? They're here.
All right. I'm on my way.
So I'm writing it *in my head*.
Even *that's* no guarantee. Hell, psychic interrogation is *page 43* of the H.A.N.D. training manual.
But I *wrote* the manual.
MAKE THE MAKER PROUD.
If I *fail*, I imagine it'll be easy to pluck it out of whatever's left of my *head*. And if I *succeed*...
Well, if you're "reading" this, whoever you are, you've got me at a rare disadvantage--*you know how it all turns out*.

I bet you have questions. I bet number one with a bullet is: Why'd he do it?
Ladies and gentlemen.
Lately I've been asking myself the same thing.
I've had a bullet in my brain since 1944. Used to say I survived, but my conscience didn't make it.
Thank you for your patience.
Up until a year ago, I answered directly to the Maker. In his absence, I answer to the Council.
For those of you "reading" who might not know:

The one with the thick French accent is Captain Britain, Henri Duggary. Ruler of Europe and the East Coast of North America, King of Avalon, and all around [redacted]
Tell me something, Fury. How is it, exactement, that a man like you... can keep men like us waiting?
Born aristocrat, obsessed with blood. The most punchable face I've ever seen, but you'd only break your hand.
Speaking of blood, there's Emmanuel Da Costa, leader of the Society of South America and the Black King of the Hellfire Club.
Stop whining, Duggary. In the seven minutes we've been waiting, I made two billion dollars.
Little known fact: Da Costa receives regular transfusions to keep him feeling young and vital. The sickly looking kid attached to him via IV is his own son.
The boy has a genetic mutation that gives him power over fire and light. A dying sun. Heh.
Your time cannot be wasted without your consent. You have only yourself to blame.
No wonder you are troubled by two old men and a laptop...
The transfusions give Da Costa temporary super-attributes. His son is just one of many blood boys...
The Rasputins are infamous, of course. The new Tsars of Eurasia and Limbo, and direct descendents of the actual Rasputin. They inherited his famous sense of humor.
We are not here for making money. We are here for making graves.
They rule with an iron fist, literally.
The Rasputins never smile, and speak only when they have to.

Emperor Sunfire doesn't speak at all. He has Viper, "the voice of the Rising Sun," for that.
His Heavenly Sovereign has urgent matters at home. Our efforts with the Children of the Atom are at a critical juncture. It is His wish that this meeting be completed with all possible haste.
Sunfire is Emperor of Hi No Kuni, He-Who-Sits the Chrysanthemum Throne.
Ra and Khonshu. The Lords of the Upper and Lower Kingdoms. The chosen representatives of the Egyptian gods on Earth. They rule all of Africa.
Well, almost all.
The world struggles in its yolk.
On its body are festering sores and vermin.
In the morning, they rise up like leeks.
In the evening, they sink down and die.
The gods follow a different order of logic and are mysteries even to me.
Finally, the gray monster with the serene face is Bruce Banner, the Incredible Enlightened Hulk. Him I bet you've heard of.
Rules most of Asia and the West Coast of North America. Absolute monarch of the Seven Celestial Cities of Heaven. Spiritual leader to billions.
You have our attention, Fury. Report.
The Hulk is the strongest thing on Earth, and the most dangerous.
They are the Council. They rule the world.
Glad you could all make it. I've been meaning to get you all together for a while.
At least for now.

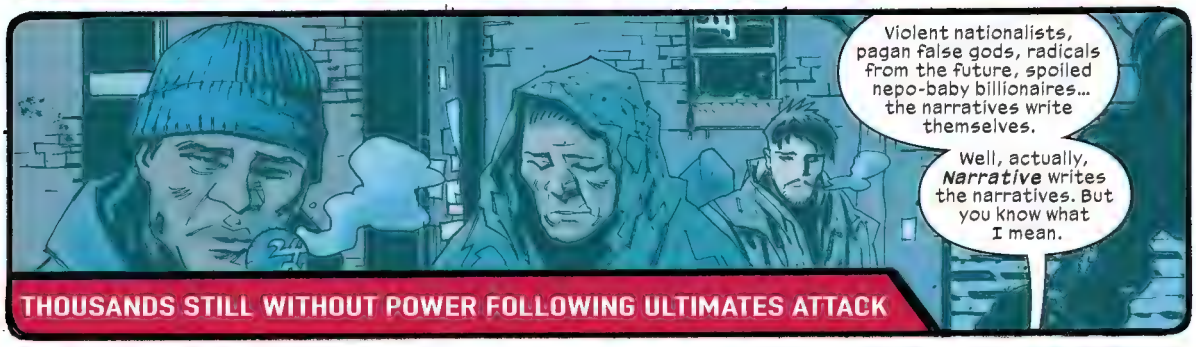
They're monsters, but my hands have as much blood on them as theirs.
--have been monitoring the Ultimates situation since--
These are my kinds of people now. This is my kind of party.
It wasn't always...
Those early days were different...
...kicking in the teeth of Nazi vampires...sabotaging super-weapons with Dum Dum and the Howlers...
Good and evil. Black and white.
Things seemed much clearer then.
Cleaner.

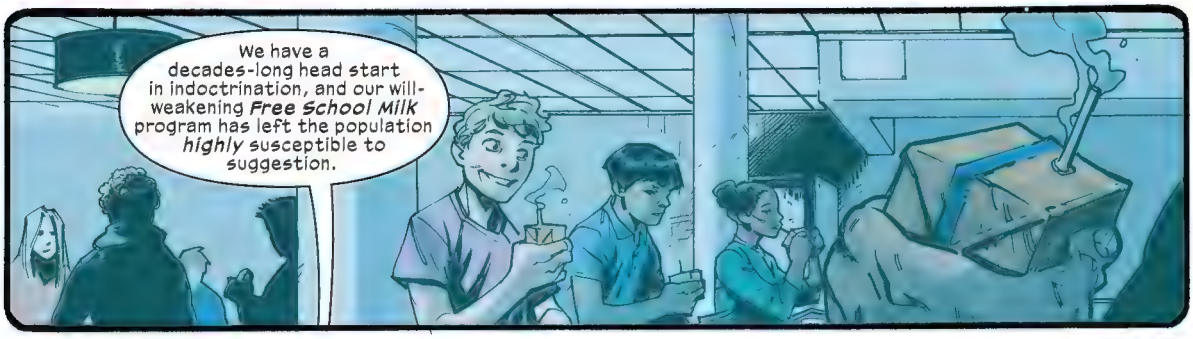
Then... things get... blurry...
And...
And...
Fury.
Fury!

Enough tiresome backstory! We already know all of this.
Give us something new.
Well, following Doctor Banner's failure in K'un-Lun--*
*See Ultimates #6.
I killed the Stark boy. I'm certain of it. I felt him die in my hands.
CRUNCH
"Maybe. He hasn't been seen since. But the others are still operating.
"Three weeks ago, the one from the White House--calling herself 'Miss America Chavez'--intervened to protect a group of pro-democracy protestors in Guatemala City.
DEFENDERS
DEMOCRACY

"One week ago, another Damage Control facility was raided and burned to the ground by a 'flying man on fire.' What was lost is still unclear.
"And just yesterday, a shipment of weapons meant for the war in Wakanda was destroyed. By *exploding arrows.*"
The Ultimates Terrorist Network is *still active.* They are now less high profile, less ambitious, and more careful.
"Incredible" work, Banner.
Careful, Fury. I have... recently rediscovered an appreciation for *mindless violence.*
I'm not afraid of death anymore.
What scares me *now* is dying without some kind of *redemption.*
So I'm playing along.
There *is* good news.

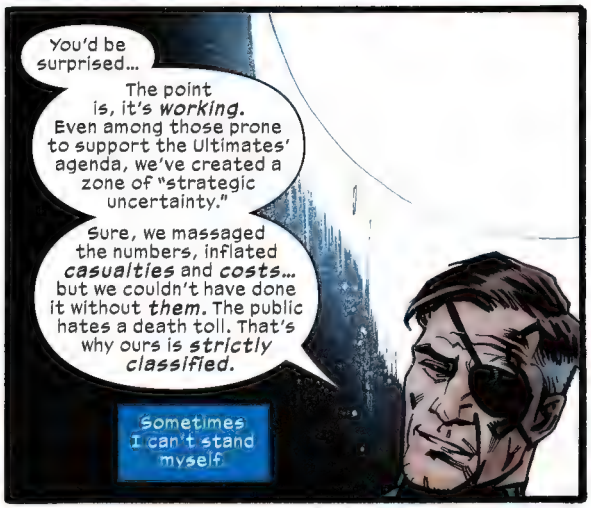
We are *handily* winning the information war. The terrorist framing has almost *total* penetration.
It's a classic for a reason.
ULTIMATES PUT THEIR FOOT DOWN


Violent nationalists, pagan false gods, radicals from the future, spoiled nepo-baby billionaires... the narratives write themselves.
Well, actually, *Narrative* writes the narratives. But you know what I mean.
THOUSANDS STILL WITHOUT POWER FOLLOWING ULTIMATES ATTACK


We have a decades-long head start in indoctrination, and our will-weakening *Free School Milk* program has left the population *highly* susceptible to suggestion.

Culture has ramped up its efforts and flooded all media channels with pro-status-quo messaging--film, TV, music, podcasts, video games, comic books.
THEY HATE YOU!

It can be hard to tell the difference between following orders and playing along.
Comic books? That's a waste of resources, isn't it? Does anyone still *read* those?


You'd be surprised...
The point is, it's *working.* Even among those prone to support the Ultimates' agenda, we've created a zone of "strategic uncertainty."
Sure, we massaged the numbers, inflated *casualties* and *costs*... but we couldn't have done it without *them.* The public hates a death toll. That's why ours is *strictly classified.*
Sometimes I can't stand myself.

But, bright side. Soon I won't have to
00:14:11
Information war?
And what of war-war?
Our way when we have such a problem is to come to them in their home, when they sit on toilet, or sleeping with wife. We kill family--children, grandmother, doesn't matter--so that they can see...
...and drag them through street in dripping chains, so that everyone can see. And then...no more problem.
So where is home?
We're working on it. Their technology is decades ahead of anything found outside of the City.
"We've recovered one of the stealth-suits with only minor damage. But the boys in Extechop say it could take years to fully crack."
Besides Tony Stark, the identities of the Ultimates are closely kept secrets. They could be anyone.

So you have nothing. I owe you an *apology*, Henri. It *is* possible to waste time against one's will.
This meeting is *ended*. Next time, a virtual conference will suffice.
Yes. Some of us have *continents* to run.
The Eurasian Republic does not need your aid. Our *Sentinel* and *Winter Soldier* programs will hunt down and kill any threat to our rule.
Wait. There's more.
We have seen *enough*, Fury.
"*Trust* me.
"You're not going to want to miss the big finish."
I am underwhelmed, Fury.
Go ahead, agents.

ZZIIIPPP
These are our men in Wakanda, Hi No Kuni and New York. Embedded with what we believe are likely future recruits of the Ultimates.
MAKER PROUD
"We have dozens just like them...
"...all over the world...
"...equipped with airtight artificial identities...
"...and pseudo-psychologies."
They can be anyone? Well, so can we.
Agents operating in our territories without our permission or knowledge? Outrageous! An affront!
You forget yourself, Fury!
You work for us!
No. We all work for the same person.
Don't we?

In addition to our deep-cover network, we've made serious progress in turning someone already inside the organization.
A traitor in the Ultimates? Who?
The fewer people who know, the better. For security--
Are you implying that we are security risks? That the Ultimates... have spies in our organizations?
Like I said: They could be anyone.
If you've ever wondered how a group of power-hungry [redacted] like this could work together, the answer is: They don't. Not really.
My people are dedicated to me--body, mind and spirit.
Though it would explain certain things--how else could they have escaped you in K'un-Lun?
But the Maker kept them in line. And the Maker's design kept them in balance.
I seem to recall them escaping Duggary...and your man in the White House...
I was surprised by the giant--
With Stark and Stane gone, North America carved up, and the Maker locked in the city for another year (which for him is more like ten thousand)...
...the entire system is beginning to break down. I'm just gonna hurry things up a little.
Perhaps we should revisit the partition of North America...you seem stretched beyond your capacities...
--maker of heaven and earth, I am the establisher of the mountains, the creator of the waters and two secret horizons. I am the light and I am darkness, I made the hours and the--

But we're getting to the end here, and I still haven't answered your question. Whoever you are.

Why'd I do it?

Serve the Maker. Then betray him.
Maybe a bullet killed my conscience in '44. Maybe it grew back.

Whatever I did, I believed I was doing for the greater good.

For the greater good, I enabled the inhuman genocide and subsequent diaspora.
For the greater good, I killed a family of Star Children meant to usher in a bright new human age.
For the greater good, I permanently crippled promising young scientists with potentially destabilizing ideas.
Are we *boring* you, Fury?
I gave my *life* to the greater good.
Which would make me a dead man, *huh?*
Always. But now you've got my full attention.
Initiate self-destruct sequence. Fury Override Code *Z9448Z84H-Slash-D.*

Self-destruct initiated.
One thing I've learned after sixty years of killing so-called "super heroes" is--
Fury? What...?
--they don't stay down.
C'mon. Don't tell me you weren't half expecting it.
You can put bullets in their ten-lobed brains and bury their indestructible bodies under parking lots...
Don't look to the agents for help. Poor bastards, they're soul-bonded. Loyal to death.
You can suffocate the super-women in poison gas and run the semi-divine boys through with 100,000 volts until their perfect hearts finally give up...
In a few seconds, this entire Helicarrier goes up in a roman candle big as 10,000 Hiroshimas.
It might even kill you, Banner. We'll find out in...
Fifteen seconds to self-destruct.
...you can make them do things they never thought they could, horrible things...
I just had to make sure we were far enough away from anywhere inhabited.
I've got enough blood on my hands without adding half of Florida.
...but however many you co-opt or put down, more will rise up.

They're out there. More every day.
Fury...
Five seconds to self-destruct.
Shut your mouth.
They can be anyone.
Four...
If I succeeded and you're reading this...
I figure they've got a chance now. With you out of the way--with us out of the way--they've got a chance.
--decanted, I guess, from the astral plane, or wherever the mind goes when the brain becomes vapor--
Three...
--then know that I'm sorry.
That's gotta count for something, right?
Two...
I want you to know--I always hated all of you.
One...
See you all in Hell.
And that I know this is not enough.
Huh?

HAHAHAHAHAHAHAHA
His face! The look on his face! It gets me every time.
I suppose it's that time again. They barely last a year now.
What was it last time? An exploding island?
No, last time was the hyper-plague infected handshake. The exploding island was two attempts ago.
Did you compose a "confession" this time, Nicholas? I particularly enjoy those. "My name is Nick Fury. And this is my last confession."
I like the bit about the bullet in his brain, the conscience growing back.
Yes, very poetic.
BANG
Tsk, tsk, tsk. Impotent old man.
TING
You know, Nicholas, I'm not really one for reality television, but I could watch you struggle all day. In fact, I sometimes do. I hold viewing parties.
Your pain is a big hit with the bored billionaire demographic.

Emmanuel. Would you do the honors?
It would be my pleasure.
What's--? I--I don't understand--
Oh, but that's part of it. That you die never fully understanding-- that's part of it!
Men like you don't get redemption, Fury. Men like you get replaced.
Oh god!
Oh god, I'm ssssss...

SSSSSSSSSSSS
SSSSSSS

One of you clean this up. And download the new memories into the data bank.
Yes, sir.
I shouldn't be *seeing* this, I shouldn't be--
Quiet, Roberto. Britain and I will finish up here.
Very good. Here's to the next Director of H.A.N.D. having better luck with the Ultimates.
It will be good to have a...*fresh perspective* on the problem.
Well...
...you can hardly call it *fresh*...
And if I *failed*...

I'll never understand why the Maker continues to allow this. We demand *obēissance absolue* from all--
...if I died for nothing and the Council *lives*...
For one, a ***spy*** isn't a ***soldier*** or a citizen. A spy who won't ***betray*** you isn't much of a ***spy***.
...if you're a part of the vast and dehumanizing machine we call the ***greater good***...
Additionally, these expected betrayals have the potential to flush out ***unexpected*** ones. Traitors tend to find one another.
...then I am ***also*** sorry.
Because your life is as ***pointless*** and ***pathetic*** as mine was. But ***you're*** still there.
But to tell you the truth...
...most of all...
I may be ***dead***...

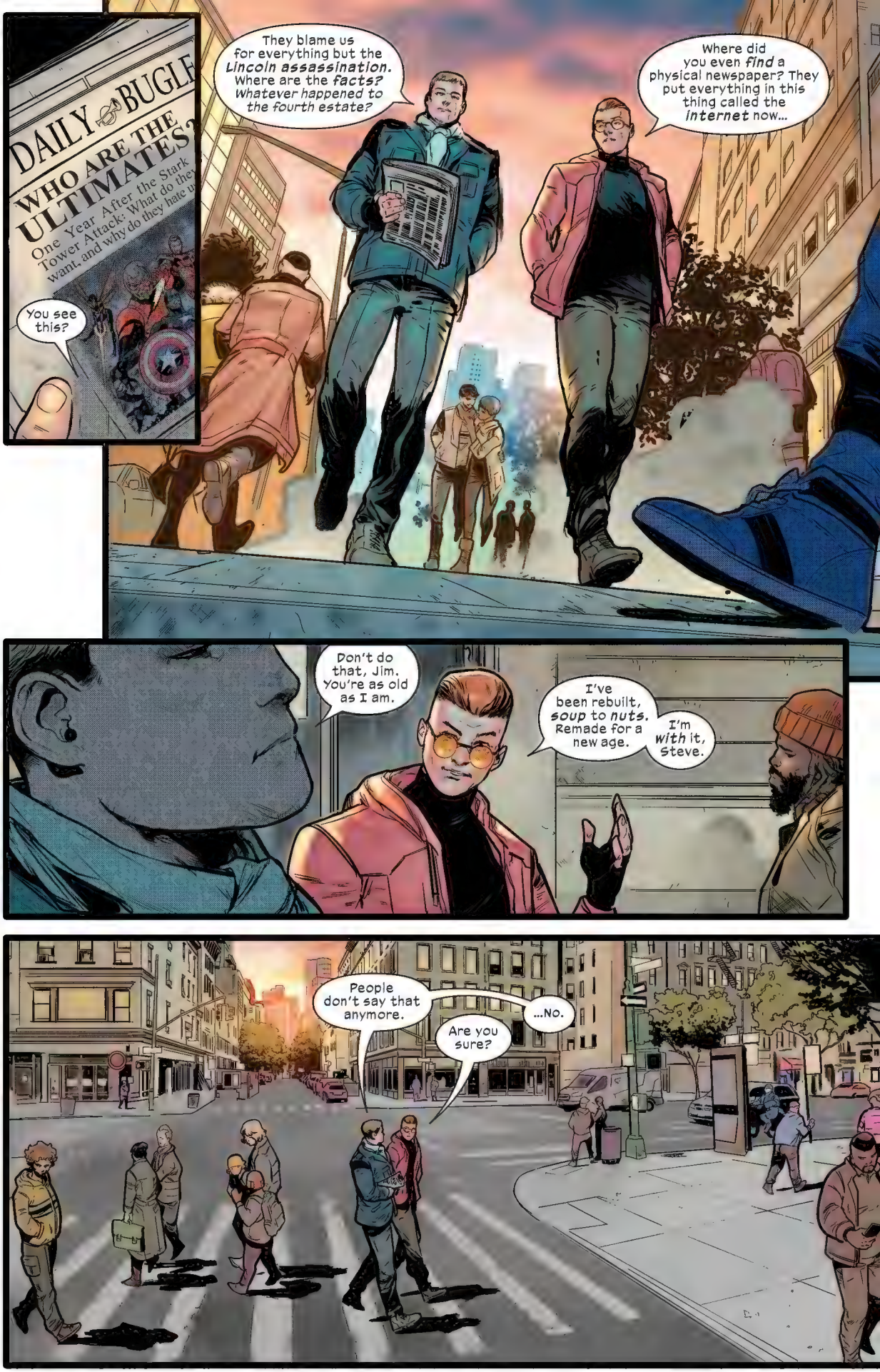
...but at least I'm free.
...I think the whole thing just makes him smile.

ULTIMATE UNIVERSE: ONE YEAR IN VARIANT BY
MARCO CHECCHETTO & **MATTHEW WILSON**

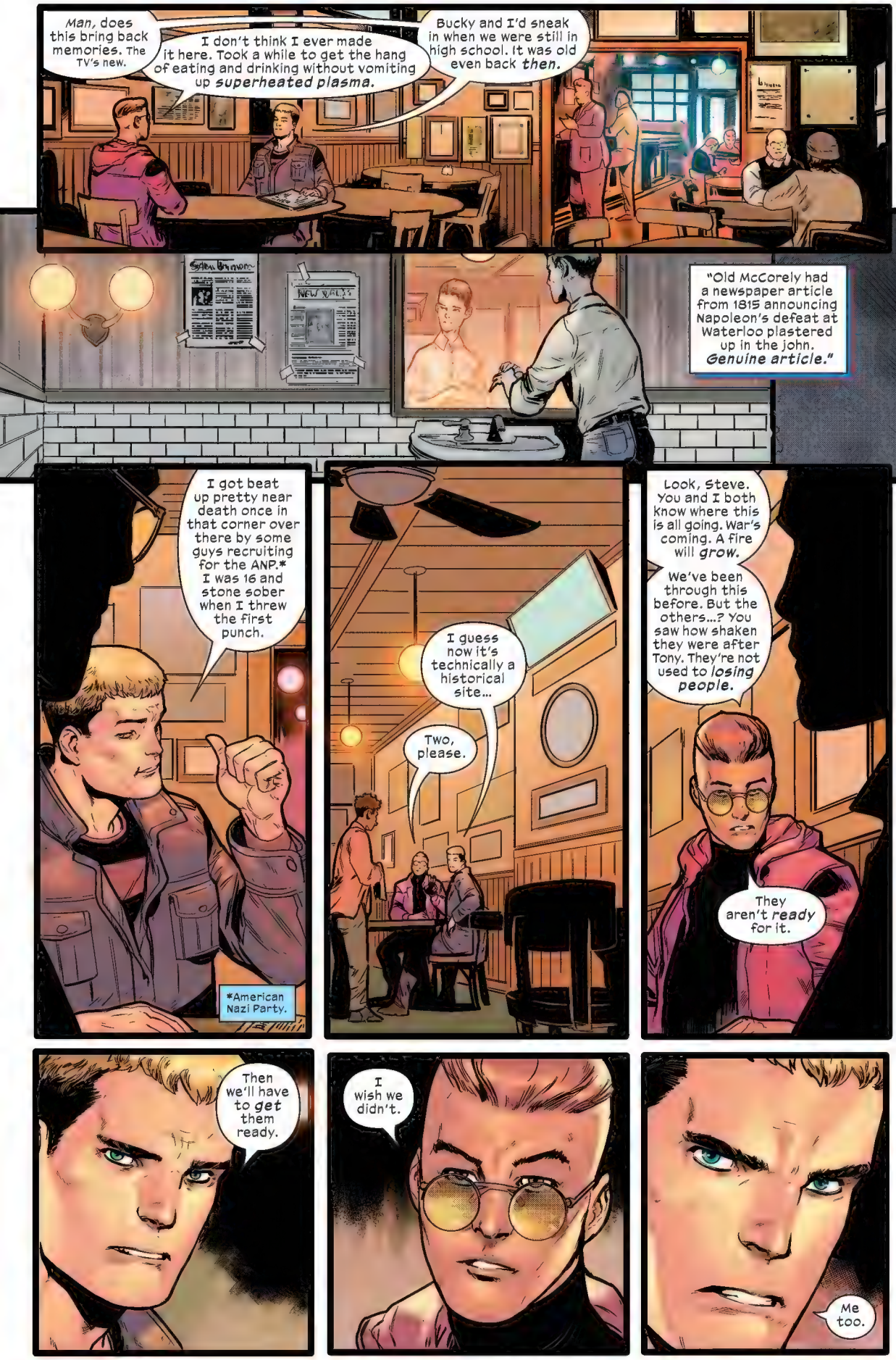
ULTIMATES #7 VARIANT BY
MAHMUD ASRAR & **MARTE GRACIA**

ULTIMATES #7 **VARIANT BY**
MIGUEL MERCADO

THE
ULTIMATES


DAILY BUGLE
WHO ARE THE ULTIMATES?
One Year After the Stark Tower Attack: What do they want, and why do they hate us?
You see this?
They blame us for everything but the Lincoln assassination. Where are the facts? Whatever happened to the fourth estate?
Where did you even find a physical newspaper? They put everything in this thing called the internet now...
Don't do that, Jim. You're as old as I am.
I've been rebuilt, soup to nuts. Remade for a new age.
I'm with it, Steve.
People don't say that anymore.
...No.
Are you sure?

C'mon, it should be around here somewhere.
Everything's so different...
The city was always changing, even in our day. They have maps on phones now...
I don't *need* a map. *Or* a phone. I just need to get my *bearings*...
Well you better find them fast, Steve.
What's that supposed to mean?
They're all looking to you for leadership. Especially with *Tony* gone--
I know that.
But do you--?
Hey, we're here!
I told you I knew where I was going!
McCORELY'S OLD ALE HOUSE
SINCE 1853


Man, does this bring back memories. The TV's new.
I don't think I ever made it here. Took a while to get the hang of eating and drinking without vomiting up superheated plasma.
Bucky and I'd sneak in when we were still in high school. It was old even back then.
"Old McCorely had a newspaper article from 1815 announcing Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo plastered up in the john. Genuine article."
I got beat up pretty near death once in that corner over there by some guys recruiting for the ANP.* I was 16 and stone sober when I threw the first punch.
*American Nazi Party.
I guess now it's technically a historical site...
Two, please.
Look, Steve. You and I both know where this is all going. War's coming. A fire will grow.
We've been through this before. But the others...? You saw how shaken they were after Tony. They're not used to losing people.
They aren't ready for it.
Then we'll have to get them ready.
I wish we didn't.
Me too.

The crowd is large, a big show of solidarity despite rumors of a planned anniversary attack from the Ultimates Terrorist Network...
LIVE AT STARK TOWER MEMORIAL
We never got to make that toast. To...new beginnings.
LIVE AT STARK TOWER MEMORIAL
Beer
--remember the thousands senselessly lost, literally hundreds of thousands of mourners here today--
Just doesn't seem right now. How about-- to all the ones who don't get saved.
We are so sorry.
And to Tony. Who brought us together. We'll try not to let you down.
I pray for them.
You know, part of me thought we should be there--
All those who we lost. I pray for them every day.
No... the kind of security they've got...

"...you'd have to be some kind of fool to go in *person.*"
One year later, and I still don't understand the darkness that drives men to this. To make their point with the deaths of thousands.
Maybe we shouldn't have come.
Now we know this destruction comes with an *ideology.* A *movement...* of *hate.*
It was your idea in the first place, Hank.
I didn't think-- someone could *recognize* us.
We left the costumes at home. We're just Hank Pym and Janet Van Dyne. Regular people, coming to pay our respects. Like thousands of others.
But in the face of *hate,* what else can we do but fully commit ourselves to *love?* And forgiveness? And *pray* for them-- yes, even them.
Boo!
[redacted] that!
They killed my son!
I miss my wife!
They really hate us, *huh?*
They don't know us. They don't understand what we're trying to do.
Yeah. Maybe.

We will now commence a reading of the names...
What happened here--it wasn't about us. You know that, right?
...William O'Shea... Brooks Pace...
It was a little about us.
I just thought it would be good for--after everything we've been through lately... with *Tony*...and...and you almost *died*, Jan.
But I didn't die. I'm okay.
Don't. Don't pretend everything's--everything's fine.
Everything *is* fine.
Sponsored by OSCORP
...Macio Paz. Stacy Peralta...
Sponsored by OSCORP

The things we've seen--the things we've done--
Please, Hank--not this again--
People have died because of us, Jan. Innocent people. Directly or indirectly. Don't pretend it doesn't bother you.
I know you're not sleeping. I know you're not sleeping because I'm not sleeping. How long do you think we can keep going like this?
I just thought... I thought it would be good if we could... mourn together or something, I guess. I don't know.
It was stupid.
No. It was a good idea, Hank.
Genius, actually.
by OSCORP
Besides, after coming back from Heaven...

"...we're supposed to be *lying low.*"
Please-- we don't want any trouble!
OSCORP DEFENSE
Formerly Stane/Stark Defense
SECURITY
We just work here!
SECURITY
EXIT
Hey! You're just a kid!
Just tell us what we gotta do to get out of here alive!
SECURITY
Stay very still.

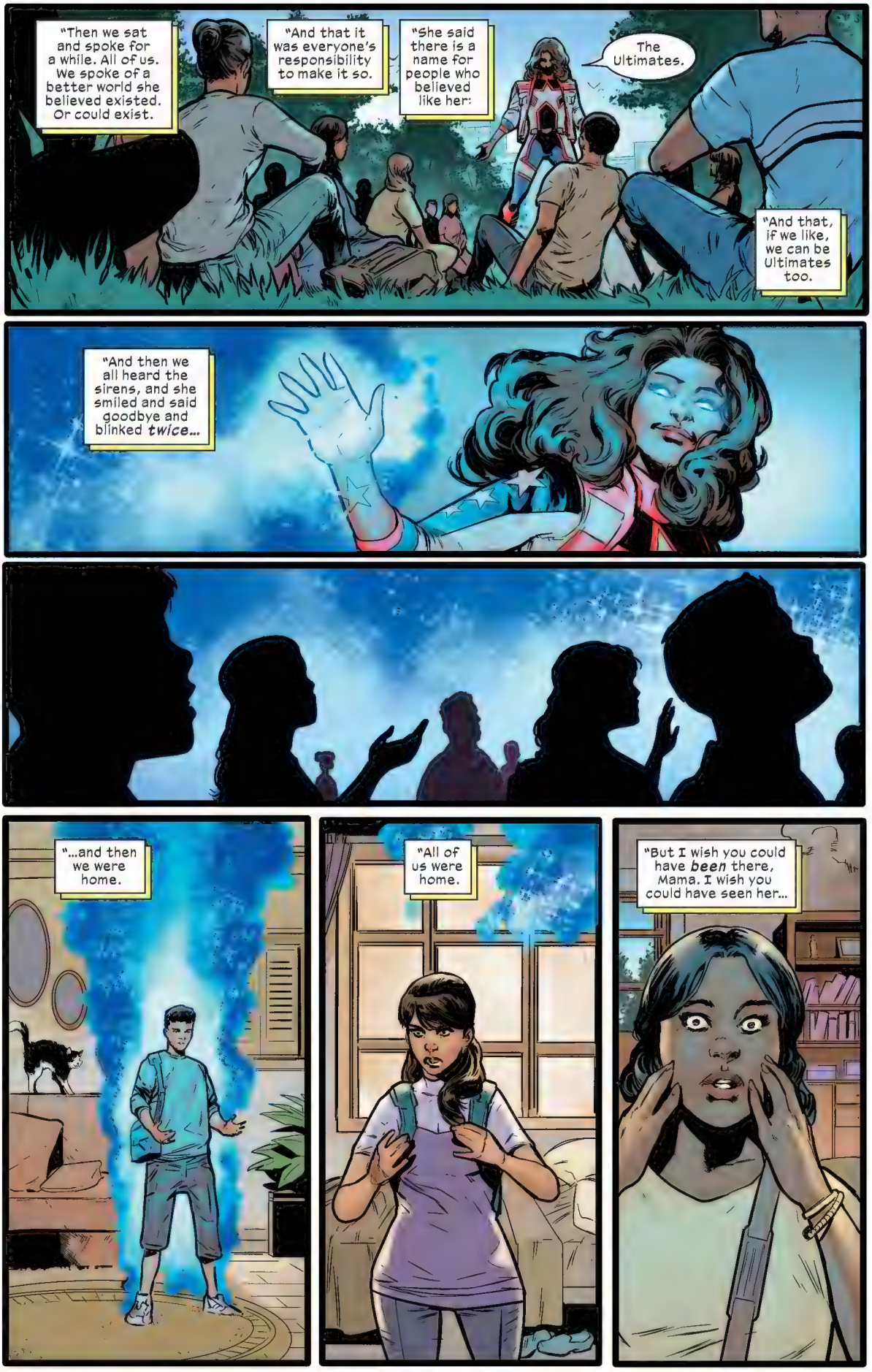
SECURITY
You don't know what you're doing.
Shut up, Gary!
These weapons are bound for the Upper and Lower Kingdoms. There's a war going on down there. A secret war.
But that's a world away. Nothing to do with you or me. Not your fight or mine.
Actually, what I'm coming to realize?
TWANG

SFFT
SFFT
SFFT
SFFT
TING
BEEP
BEEP
CRAKOOM
It's all one fight.
"And I'm telling you, Mama, you should have been there, Mama, you should have come.

DEMOCRACIA
GUATEMALA ES EL PUEBLO
"I know you don't believe in protest, and for you democracy means hard old times...
"...I know that your legs ache with varicose veins and the heat makes you tired, but you should have been there, Mama. You should have seen the stars.
EL PUEBLO TIENE VOZ!
LIBERT PARA ELEGIR
"They came with their sticks and tasers, their bulletproof shields and high-tech body armor. All of this for just a few dozen of us demonstrating in peace.
"And then the sky opened up above us.

"And she came *down* from it, covered in *stars.*
"She was so beautiful, Mama, the most beautiful person I've ever seen. Light poured out of her, like a vessel, or a saint.
"She was so bright it hurt to look at her, but it hurt more to look away.
"Then she looked at the police-- looked and blinked *once,* and--

"--and she--
"--she--
"--and I don't know *what* she did.
"But their high-tech armors *melted*--then *froze*--
"--and they fell over, making loud metallic sounds as they hit the ground.
"Still as statues.
CLUNK
CLUNG
CLUNK
"She said:
I'm sure someone will be along to cut them out soon.
"And she spoke perfectly, but with the strangest accent I've never heard before.
"Someone asked her name, and she said:
America.
"And it was beautiful, how she said it.
"Someone asked her where she came from, and she said:
I don't know. Everytime I try to think about the past, I end up thinking about the *future.*


"Then we sat and spoke for a while. All of us. We spoke of a better world she believed existed. Or could exist.
"And that it was everyone's responsibility to make it so.
"She said there is a name for people who believed like her:
The Ultimates.
"And that, if we like, we can be Ultimates too.
"And then we all heard the sirens, and she smiled and said goodbye and blinked *twice*...
"...and then we were home.
"All of us were home.
"But I wish you could have *been* there, Mama. I wish you could have seen her...

"...I wish you could have seen *the stars.*"

What did you say to Doom, Sif?

I told him that there were Nine Realms and that we have tarried too long in Midgard while neglecting the others.

I told him that we would travel Yggdrasil sowing chaos, spreading discontent and raising armies.

I told him we would deliver to All-Father Loki, master of chaos, a taste of his own medicine.

And his response?

I don't know. I didn't bother to *wait* for it.

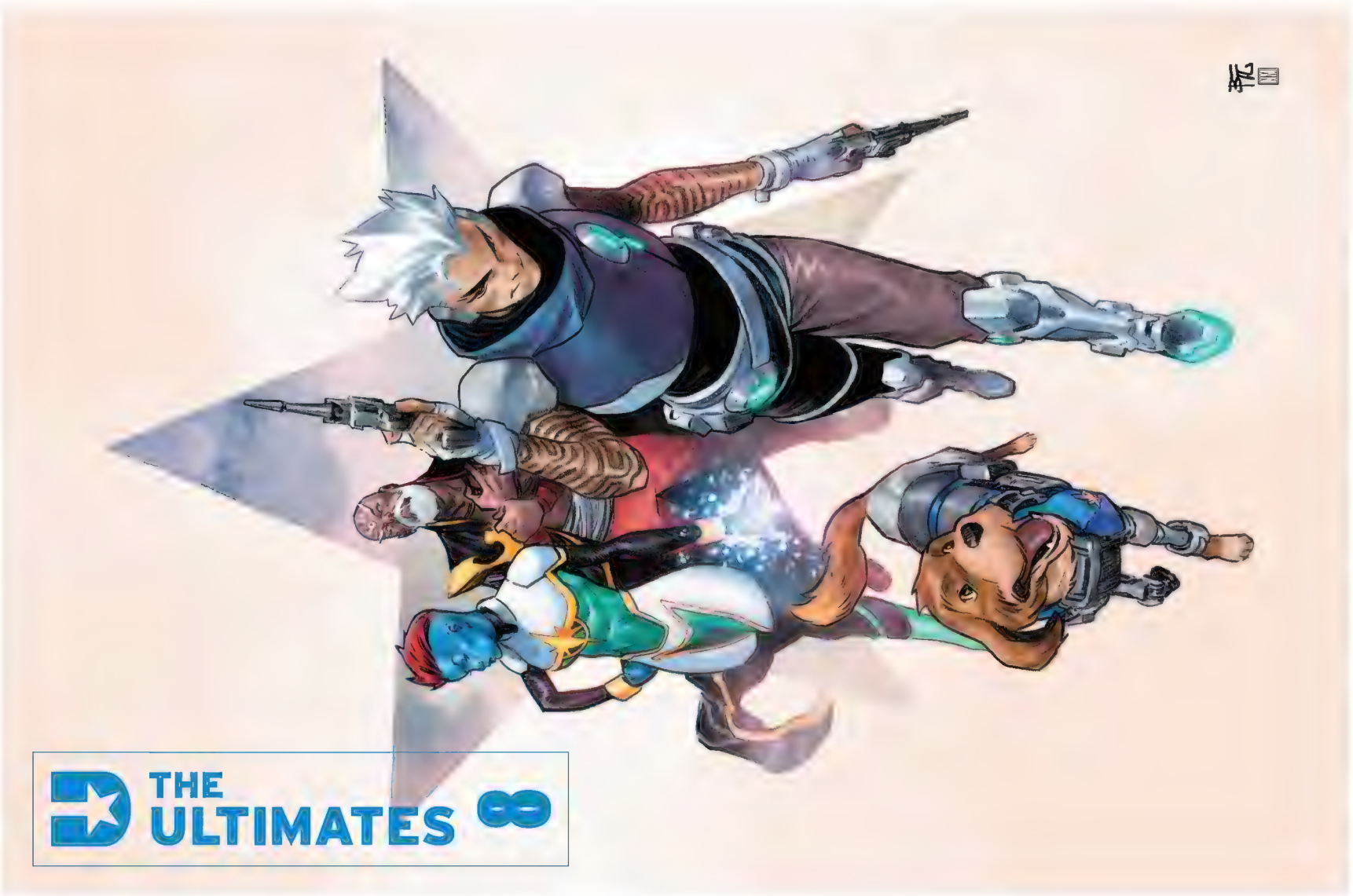
The Asgard Rebellion begins *now.* So... where should we start, Thor?

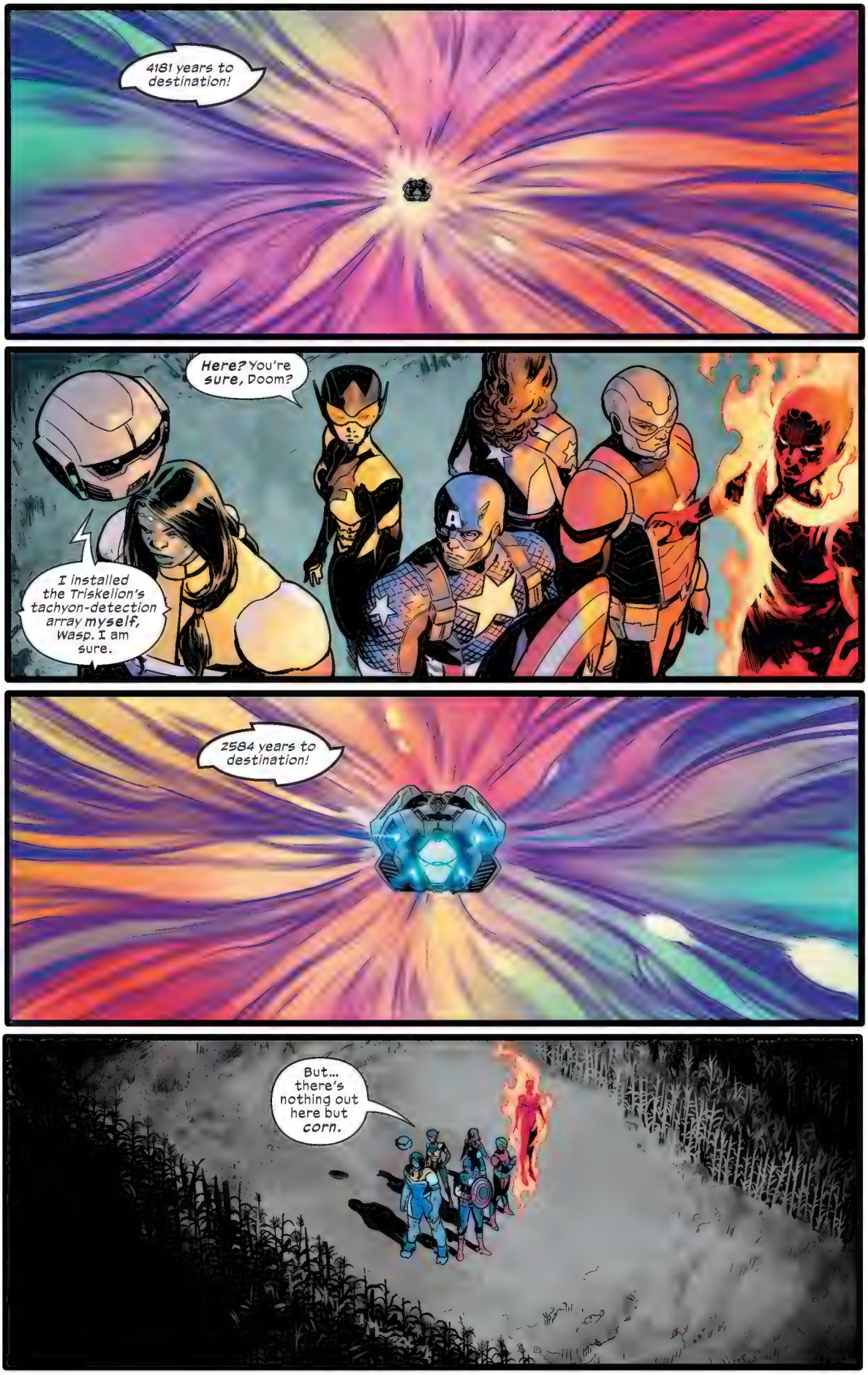
Send me back, Doom!
As I said, I *cannot*--
I have waited long enough! Your teleport network--
It is not a question of *capacity*. If I send you back to your island, you will die.
Then I will *die*.

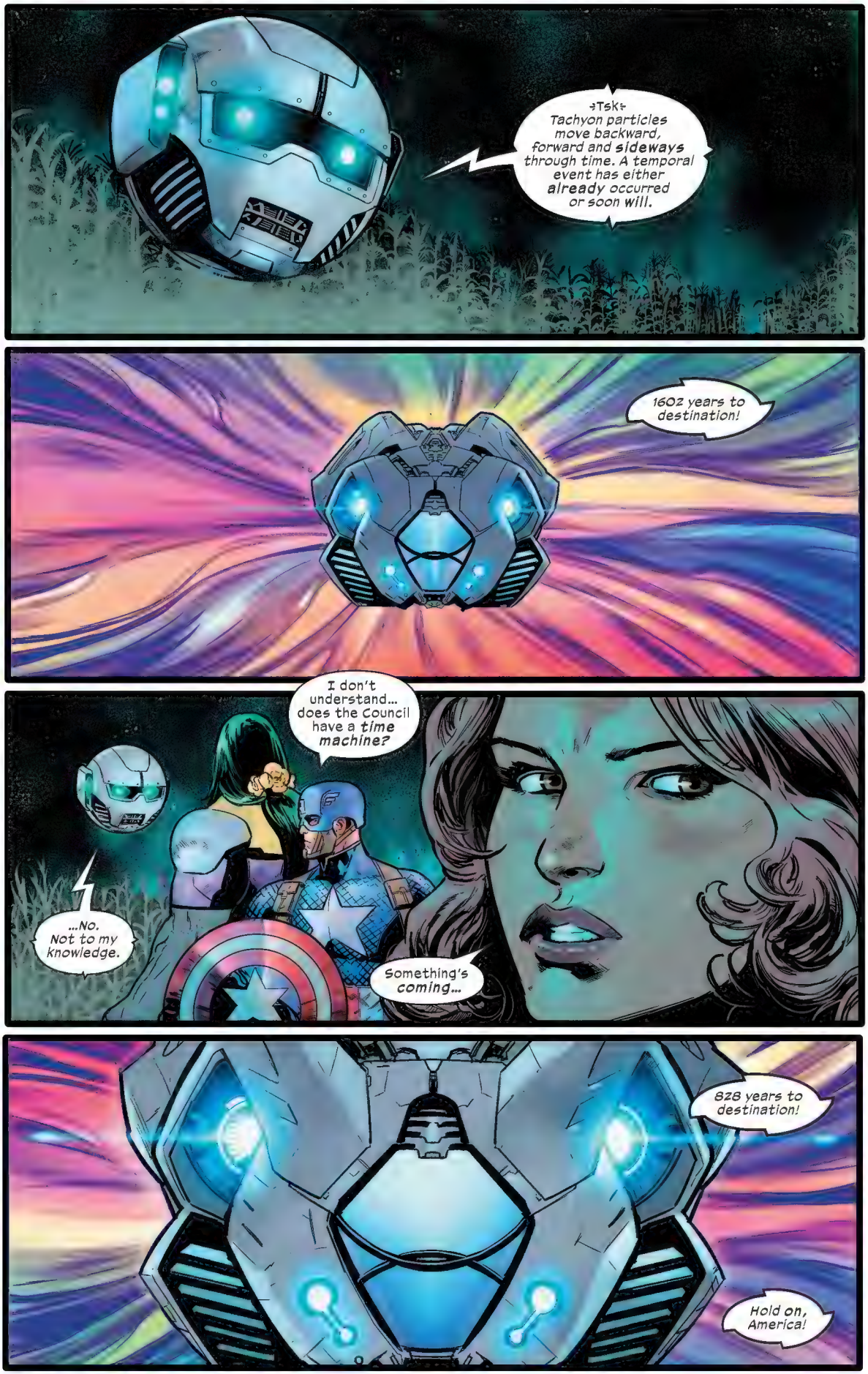
Not just you.
They will take you immediately. Banner and his men. They will torture you until you break.
They have instruments and techniques at their disposal that allow them to play through your memories like *videotape.* Cameras sensitive enough to take *pictures* of your *thoughts.*
They will discover everything about us. Including the existence of this satellite.
Not just you. We'll *all* die. And our ambitions with us.
My people *need* me.
You being here is the only thing that keeps your people *safe.* It is the power Banner has over you. His only leverage.
Then I... *I* need my *people.*

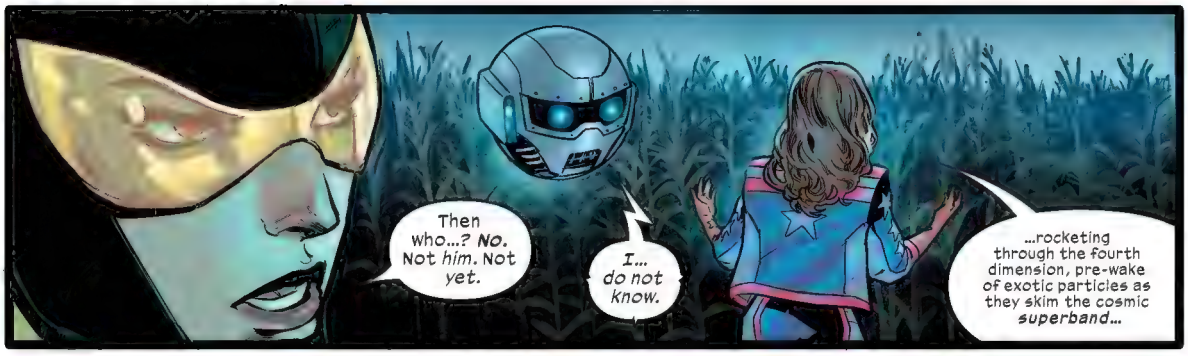
I am... out of practice with people. I think, actually...I was never very good with them.
The Ultimates was his idea.
Now we know this destruction comes with an ideology. A movement... of hate.
LIVE AT STARK TOWER MEMORIAL
And now he's left us... to hold it together.
LIVE AT STARK TOWER MEMORIAL
Perhaps... perhaps I can tap into the Hulk's surveillance system.
You won't be able to be there with them, but you'll be able to see that they're safe.
Thank you. That...will be better.
We must keep going. We owe it to him. We owe it to them all.
But in the face of hate...

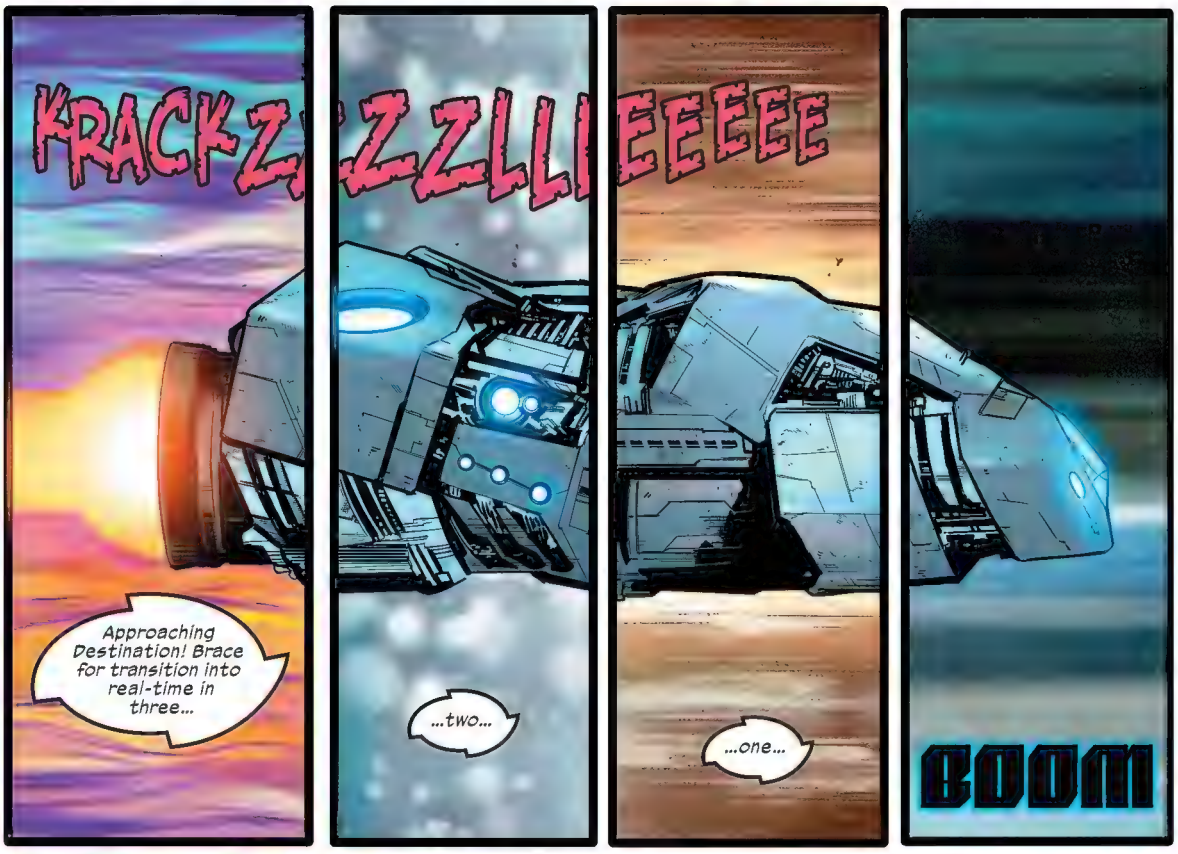
...what else can we do but fully commit ourselves to the cause of love?
And forgiveness?
And pray for them.
ELEVEN MONTHS REMAINING...

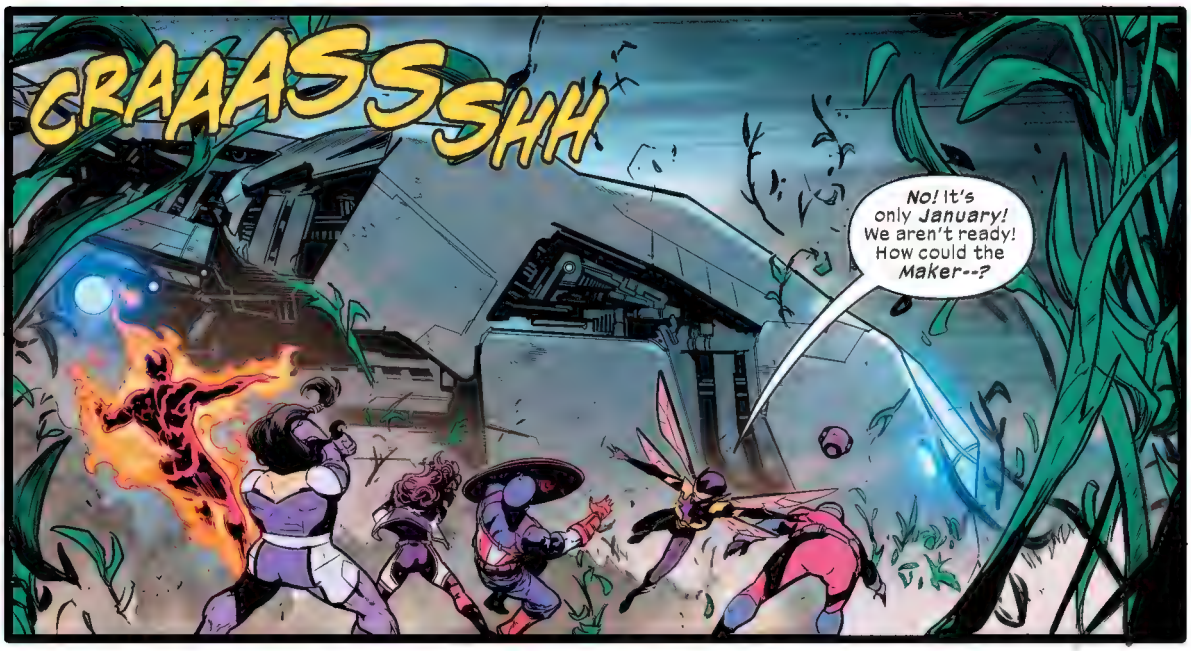

THE
ULTIMATES


4181 years to destination!
Here? You're sure, Doom?
I installed the Triskelion's tachyon-detection array myself, Wasp. I am sure.
2584 years to destination!
But... there's nothing out here but corn.


+Tsk+
Tachyon particles move backward, forward and sideways through time. A temporal event has either already occurred or soon will.
1602 years to destination!
I don't understand... does the Council have a time machine?
...No. Not to my knowledge.
Something's coming...
828 years to destination!
Hold on, America!


Then who...? NO. Not him. Not yet.
I... do not know.
...rocketing through the fourth dimension, pre-wake of exotic particles as they skim the cosmic superband...


KRACKZ
ZZZLLI
EEEEEE
Approaching Destination! Brace for transition into real-time in three...
...two...
...one...
BOOM


CRAAASSSHH
NO! It's only JANUARY! We aren't ready! How could the MAKER--?

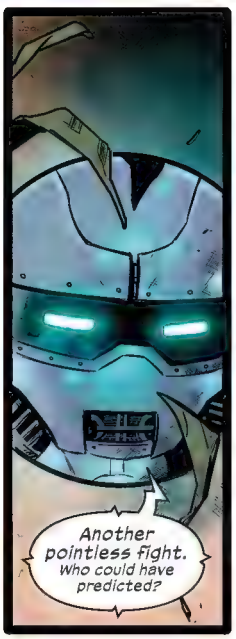
Crossed... uncountable eons... pursued by 4D hyperconquerors through the rise and fall of empires...
...waded through drowned armies of twisted pseudo-legends facedown in the SuperFlow...
...traded information with the vast, cool intelligences outside of time...
...all to find you! America, our America!
Uh. Do I know you?
..."Know me"?
Together we defeated the Ultron Dominion, splitting ourselves through the infinity prism to fight simultaneously in every moment of time and space!
When the 24th Celestial Host returned and judged the Milky Way a failure, it was us who developed a new form of super-diplomacy to convince them otherwise!
And it was your idea to work together to generate enough cosmic energy to convert contraction to expansion, turning the Negative Zone into the Positive Zone and ushering in a new age of abundance, peace and growth for that backward universe!
We are the Guardians of the Galaxy! The greatest heroes of the 61st century!
Know us? You're one of us! We came here on a ship powered by pure hope to save you from this broken past!

Doom, are you getting this...?
I am. It appears they have a time machine too. How interesting.

Hey, back off a little, miss-- you're being aggressive--
Cap--

This does not concern you!

Yeah? Well, consider us concerned.


Another pointless fight. Who could have predicted?

You must remember us, America!
TINK
"That's Star-Lord...
"...Master of the Solar System, lord of the Twelve Houses and the land beyond the sun!
H-Hank...?
The stars sing different, sadder songs now. Like far-off funeral music.
These guys have powers we don't even have names for!
"And there's Ultimate Nullifier...
"...who, in a duel in the burning back alleys of Pandemonium, shot Mephisto through his black heart with a Ø-Bullet...
There's no need to struggle. There's nothing to struggle against.
VRRR
"...single-handedly erasing the concept of eternal suffering from the universe."
I just zeroed out your kinetic energy.
The N-Guns can nullify anything I fully understand. We learned thermodynamics in the third grade.
QUUE
Rrrrrr...
Try to remain calm. We'll be done here soon.

Surely you remember *Cosmo Starstalker,* who stayed behind to protect humanity after all other canines ascended to a higher state of being--*the Ultimate Good Boy!*
We never gave up on you, America. *Never.*
And I'm *Captain Marvel,* Protector of the Universe, wielder of the Omni-Bands!
You...you really don't *remember* me?
I... You...
...you're attacking my friends!
Them? These twisted, depthless re-creations?
"These sad mockeries of what should have been...?"

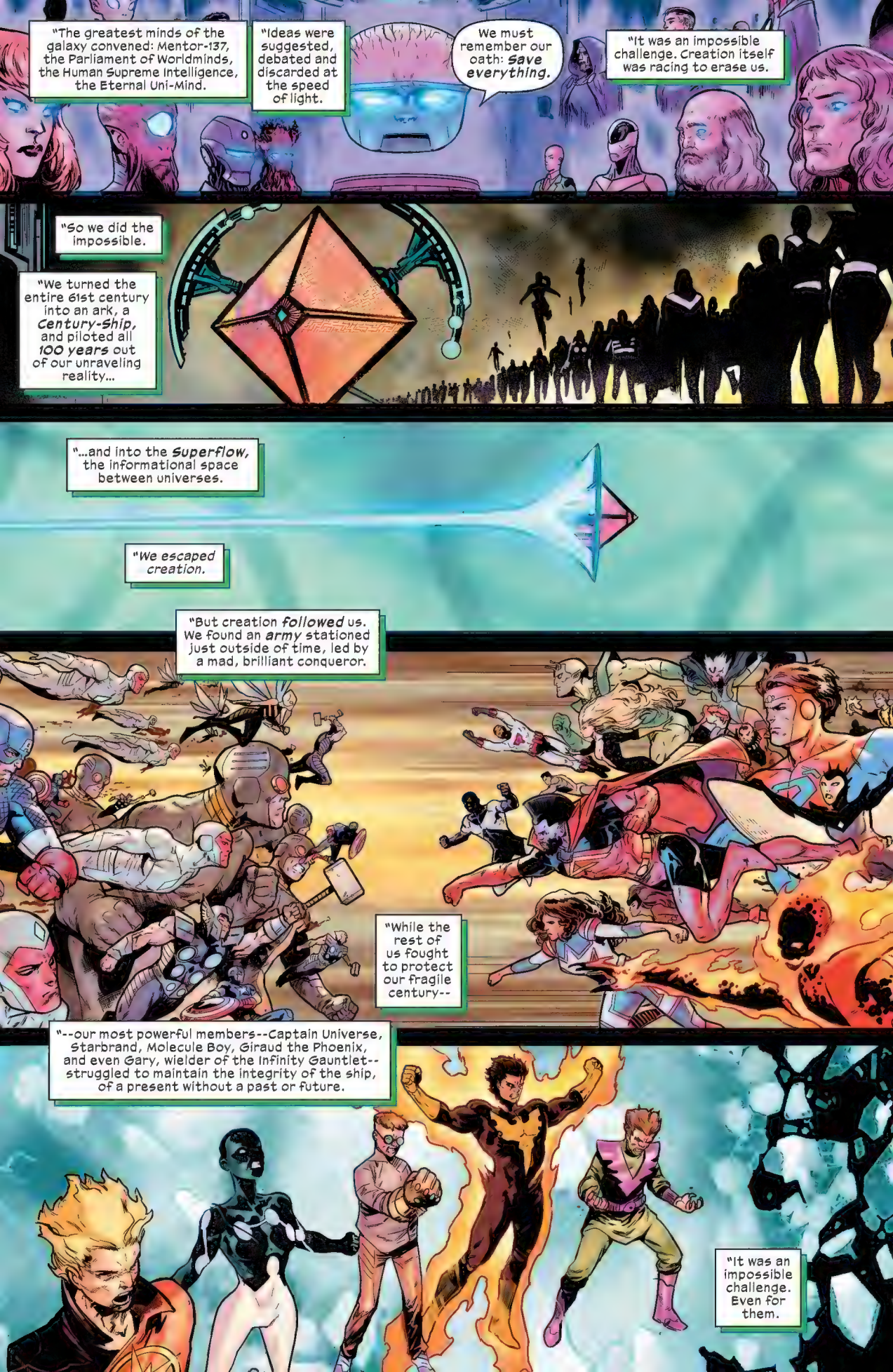
Don't talk about my friends that way!
They're not your friends. We're your friends. Show her, Cosmo!
=Sniff sniff= Don't worry, America. We'll repair whatever's--
Hey, what are you... You're in my...
Butchers!
Her mind... it has been cut open. Again and again...with primitive psychic instruments.
Like performing brain surgery with a rusty saw!
My... head...
I'm so very sorry-- those memories cannot be retrieved. They've amputated her past!
Get...
...OUT!

I've never kicked a dog in my life, but after what you just did to America, I'm *considering* it.
I *apologize*...we have more liberal ideas about psychic consent when we come from. *Especially* between Guardians.
It goes against my every principle to pry into minds uninvited, but you are practically *screaming* it. Tell me...
...are you aware that you all share the *same bad dream?*
Look.

Ah.
You are not the Doom we know, but there's something familiar about you...something dangerous...
...what is it?
You can see me? How interesting...our encryption--
--reminded me of the numbers games we played as children.
We can do things with your technology that you cannot dream of.
Observing, always observing from behind your mask.
You're looking for something. You will never find it.
"I have temporarily disabled your space station's communication, surveillance, transportation and weapons systems. Also, your primitive time machine.
"America belongs with us. Do not attempt to interfere."
The man in the Iron Mask, the man in the Iron Lung. NOW I remember! One of you will be responsible for untold suffering and the deaths of trillions...and the other could save everything.
Now which was which...?

Stop, America! Please stop!!!
If they took your past, then I'll give you *mine!*
"My life is *your* life. *Remember?*

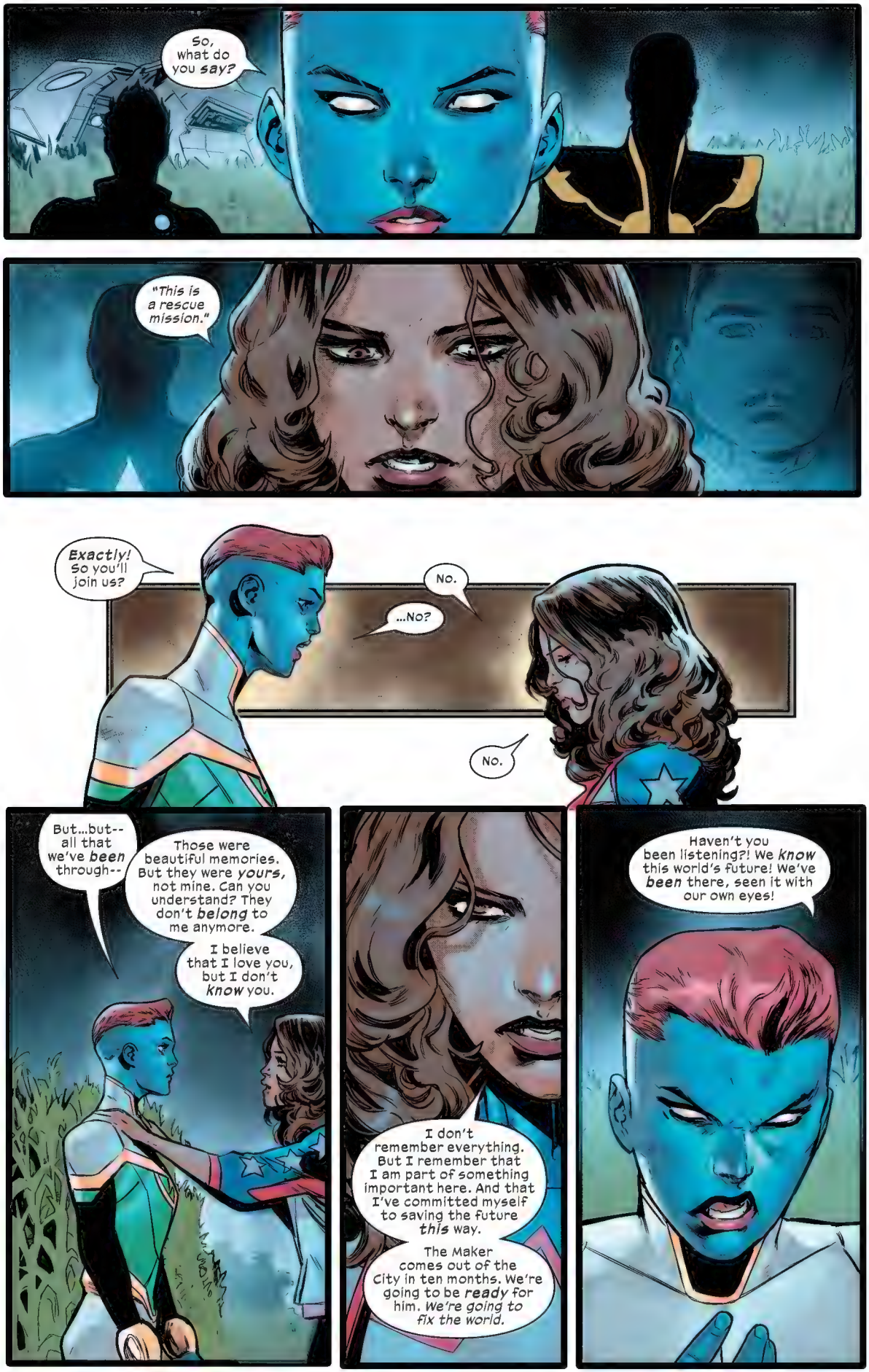
"The 61st century. Try to remember: a post-scarcity, post-imperialist paradise-in-progress. This is what we lost.
"250,000 Superguardians protecting over 400 million inhabited worlds.
"The apogee of an unbroken age of heroes going back 4000 years.
"The Guardians of the Galaxy saved the universe on a monthly basis for millennia. Perhaps that's why we were so confident we would do so again.
"Captain Universe was the first to notice. It presented as sharp chest pain and crushing grief, radiating from the 21st century and down the right arm.
"Soon, temporal seismographs were giving off impossible readings, indicating a catastrophe in time.
"A group of our most experienced Guardians was sent to the past to investigate.
"Only one returned.
The Unmaker... we are unmade...


"The greatest minds of the galaxy convened: Mentor-137, the Parliament of Worldminds, the Human Supreme Intelligence, the Eternal Uni-Mind.
"Ideas were suggested, debated and discarded at the speed of light.
We must remember our oath: ***save everything.***
"It was an impossible challenge. Creation itself was racing to erase us.
"So we did the impossible.
"We turned the entire 61st century into an ark, a ***Century-Ship,*** and piloted all ***100 years*** out of our unraveling reality...
"...and into the ***Superflow,*** the informational space between universes.
"We escaped creation.
"But creation ***followed*** us. We found an ***army*** stationed just outside of time, led by a mad, brilliant conqueror.
"While the rest of us fought to protect our fragile century--
"--our most powerful members--Captain Universe, Starbrand, Molecule Boy, Giraud the Phoenix, and even Gary, wielder of the Infinity Gauntlet--struggled to maintain the integrity of the ship, of a present without a past or future.
"It was an impossible challenge. Even for them.

"How to describe the death of a universe? The head holds only fragments, moments:
"Xandar the Brightmind, Hero-Star of Tranta, so overcome with grief it went *nova*, then collapsed into a black hole...
"The ten billion descendents of Banner, the so-called *Planet Hulk*, trying to hold back reality with their *bare hands*...
"The terrible, bloated corpse of Galactus the Lifebringer, *Seeder of Worlds*...
"...floating through space like a rotting rogue *world*, and the terrible things that had begun to grow *inside* it...

"As the 61st century fell apart around us, we pointed our ship back the way we *came*, into whatever reality had replaced *ours*.
"Hoping for a *soft landing*...
"Countless centillions died on impact...100 years splintered like cheap gopher wood...tragedy on a *biblical* scale...!
"A few Guardians *survived*...
"...thrown faster than light through time in every direction.
"I landed in the distant past.
"With only Stone Age tools, I built our ship, the *Apokatastasis*, out of the broken fragments of the 61st century and began the search for other survivors."

But America's been here--being *tortured*--for years. Why are you just coming for her *now?*
There is a 62-year span of "hard time" from 1963 to 2024, impenetrable even to us. The origin of the temporal anomaly that unmade our universe.
You must have landed *inside* that period--your momentum and unique cosmic energy field somehow piercing the Unmaker's barrier.
I feared...I thought you were...until Cosmo finally caught your scent 5000 years from now! We came to rescue you!
I--I don't know. I--
Once we've rescued everyone, we'll find a way to break the barrier and undo the Unmaker's work--restoring the rightful future, saving our universe and our *friends.*
But won't that...wouldn't that erase all of us? Like...erase our world, the way it erased yours?
There are ways around that. We have methods of timeline *pruning* and *replanting.* Given *time,* we can save *everyone.*


So, what do you *say?*
"This is a rescue mission."
Exactly! So you'll join us?
No.
...No?
No.
But...but--all that we've ***been*** through--
Those were beautiful memories. But they were ***yours,*** not mine. Can you understand? They don't ***belong*** to me anymore.
I believe that I love you, but I don't ***know*** you.
I don't remember everything. But I remember that I am part of something important here. And that I've committed myself to saving the future ***this*** way.
The Maker comes out of the City in ten months. We're going to be ***ready*** for him. *We're going to fix the world.*
Haven't you been listening?! We ***know*** this world's future! We've ***been*** there, seen it with our own eyes!

"You lose, America!
"The Unmaker wins!"

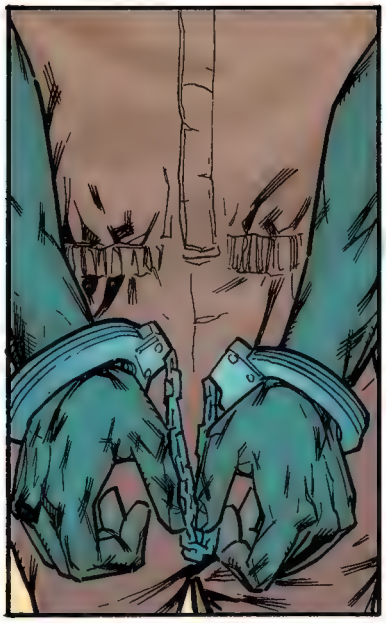
Maybe. But the future can change. We're proof of that, aren't we?
What I don't get is, they came to this exact spot by tracking America's unique aura. But America was only here because Doom detected them coming hours ago.
So which came first? What caused what?
Best not to think about it, honey.
I can't believe this... you're turning your back on us...for them?
Don't pout. I have a feeling it's not like you.
-Sigh- At least take this temporal flare. Whenever we are, we will see it. And when you need us...we'll be there.
This... this isn't goodbye.
You've broken my heart, but my purpose remains intact. There are other Guardians stranded out there... and we can't rest until we've found them all.
"Save everything."
The Guardian oath. You do remember.

"Good luck, America. I do not envy you.
"I've *seen* this world's future. It's all *impossible choices* and *tragic outcomes.*"
TEN MONTHS REMAINING...

THE ULTIMATES

FEBRUARY
2005
SEAGATE
PENITENTIARY
One year to life?
But I'm only 15!
It's actually very progressive.
You could be out in as soon as one year! Previously, this would have carried a mandatory five-year sentence!
But I don't even know what I've been convicted of!
Well, neither do I. But convicted you were. It was an administrative trial.
I don't really know the details. I'm not a lawyer.
B-b-but--
Look, I don't want to get into a whole "discussion" about it, okay? I'm just here to tell you what's happening.
Carl Lucas "Luke" Cage... you're going away for a while.
Tsk. Don't look so glum. It's just one year. You'll be out before you know it.

FEBRUARY 2025
GORDIUM CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

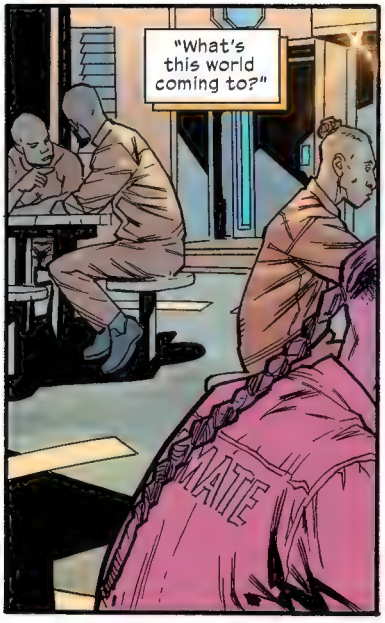


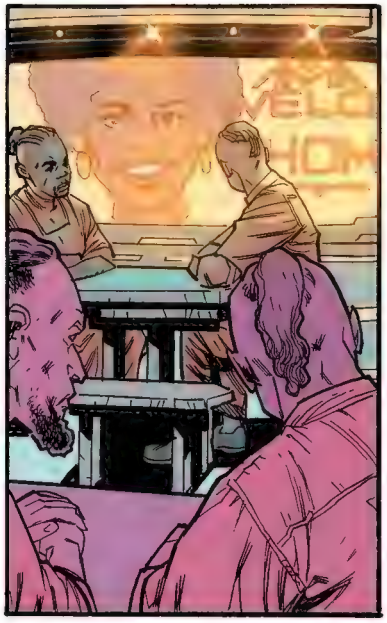
[Lucas Cage.] Welcome to Gordium Correctional Facility, a Midas Group Penitentiary specializing in the for-profit-prison space.

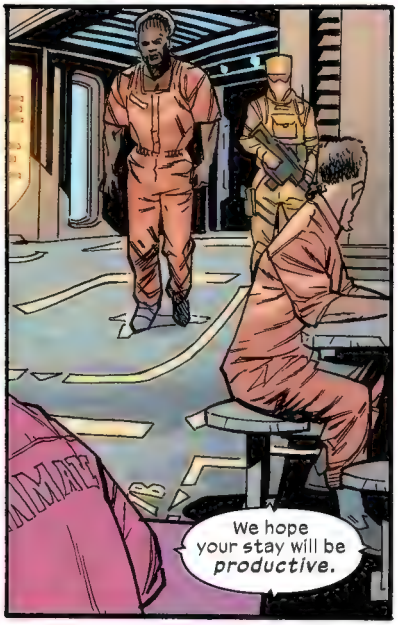
Just a reminder: Your global citizenship has been officially revoked. Inside these walls, you do not have rights of any kind.

Obey the guards. Follow the rules. Stay out of trouble. And there will be no problems.
Hey, did you hear about this riot in New Brunswick?

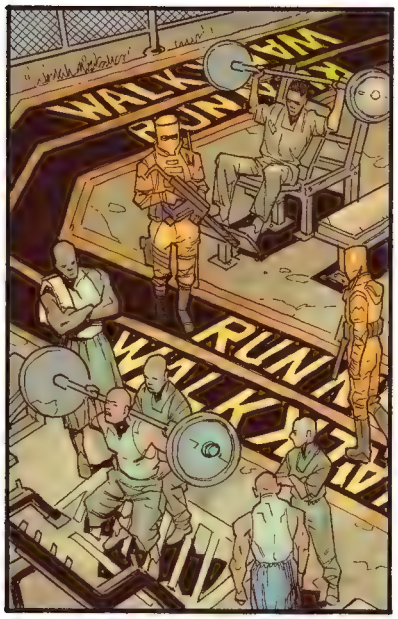
They're trying to keep it hush-hush, but I heard the inmates are still in control of the facility.
Midas is proud to keep costs down and our community safe.
God. That's the second facility this year.

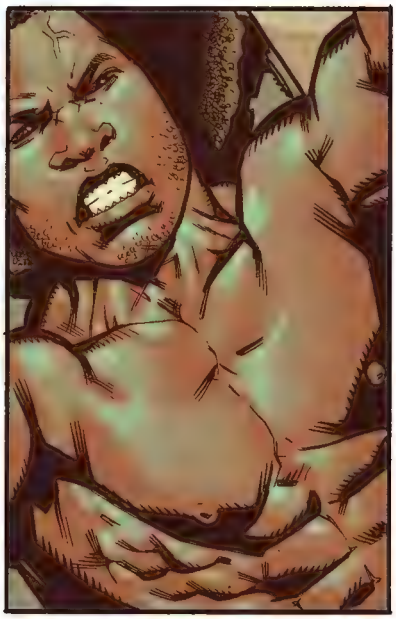




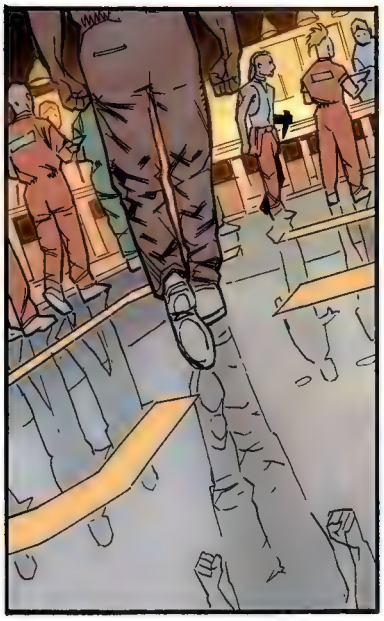


FEBRUARY 2006
SEAGATE PENITENTIARY



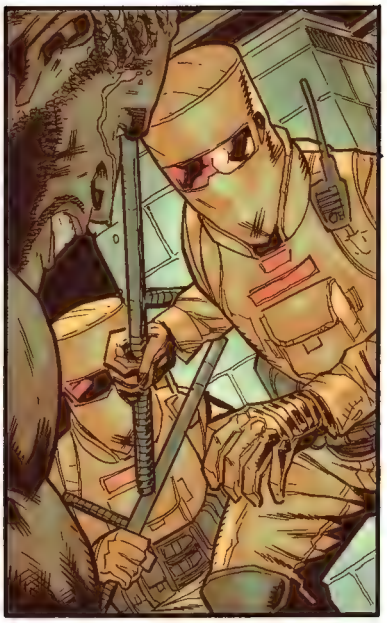


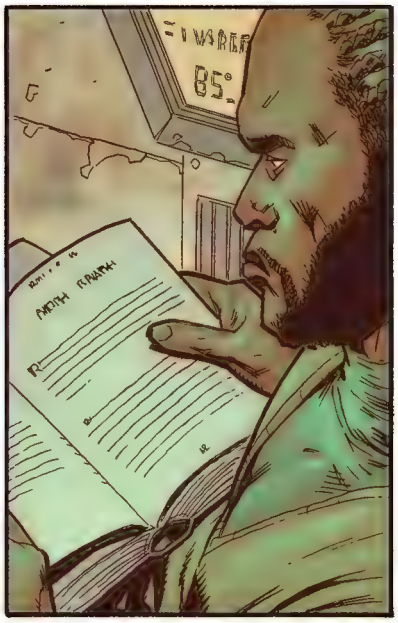
FEBRUARY 2025
GORDIUM CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

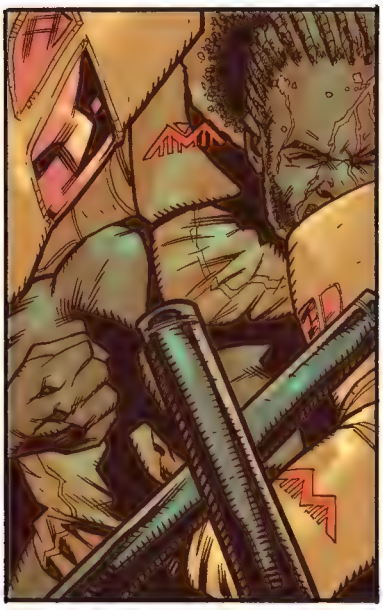


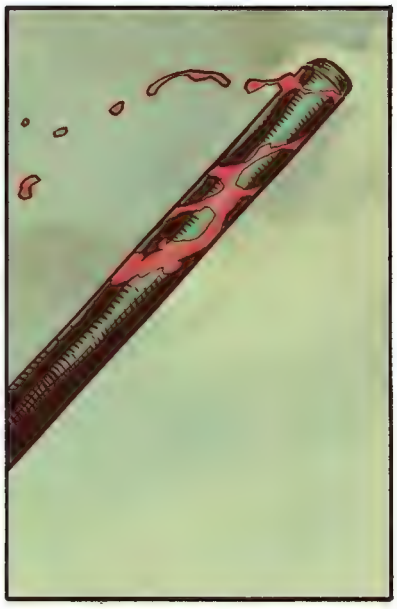
Listen, man, thanks for the *help,* but...word of advice from someone who's been here a while?
Mind your own business and watch your own back. Because no one's gonna watch it for you.

FEBRUARY 2010
SEAGATE PENITENTIARY







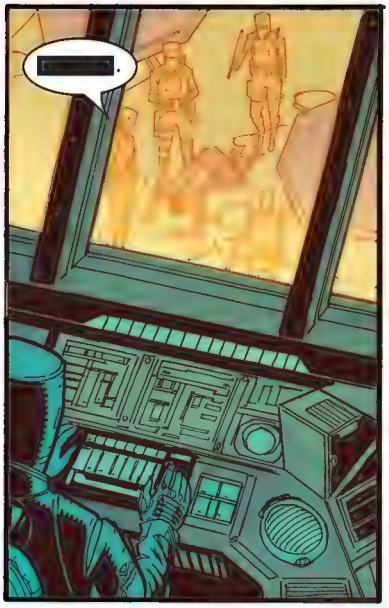


FEBRUARY 2025
GORDIUM CORRECTIONAL FACILITY
Here at Gordium, we're innovating our way to a better tomorrow!
One of Midas' many innovations in the penal space is our mandatory worker-employment program.
What is happening here is modern-day slavery, nothing less.
Inmates have a chance to learn useful skills, and Midas subsidiaries have access to an almost inexhaustible pool of labor.
Slavery is social death. It is to be forever cut off from your context and community. It is to have never been born.
They have made us into non-people. Explicitly.
The Midas way is the right way.
They say it's about justice. They say it's about the law.
It's not about any of that [redacted].
So what's it all about?
It's about power, man.

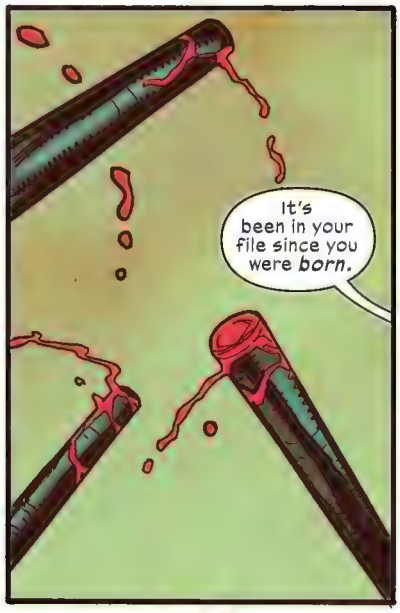
FEBRUARY
2014
SEAGATE
PENITENTIARY

We hear you're a real go-getter, Cage! Forming your own prison gang...

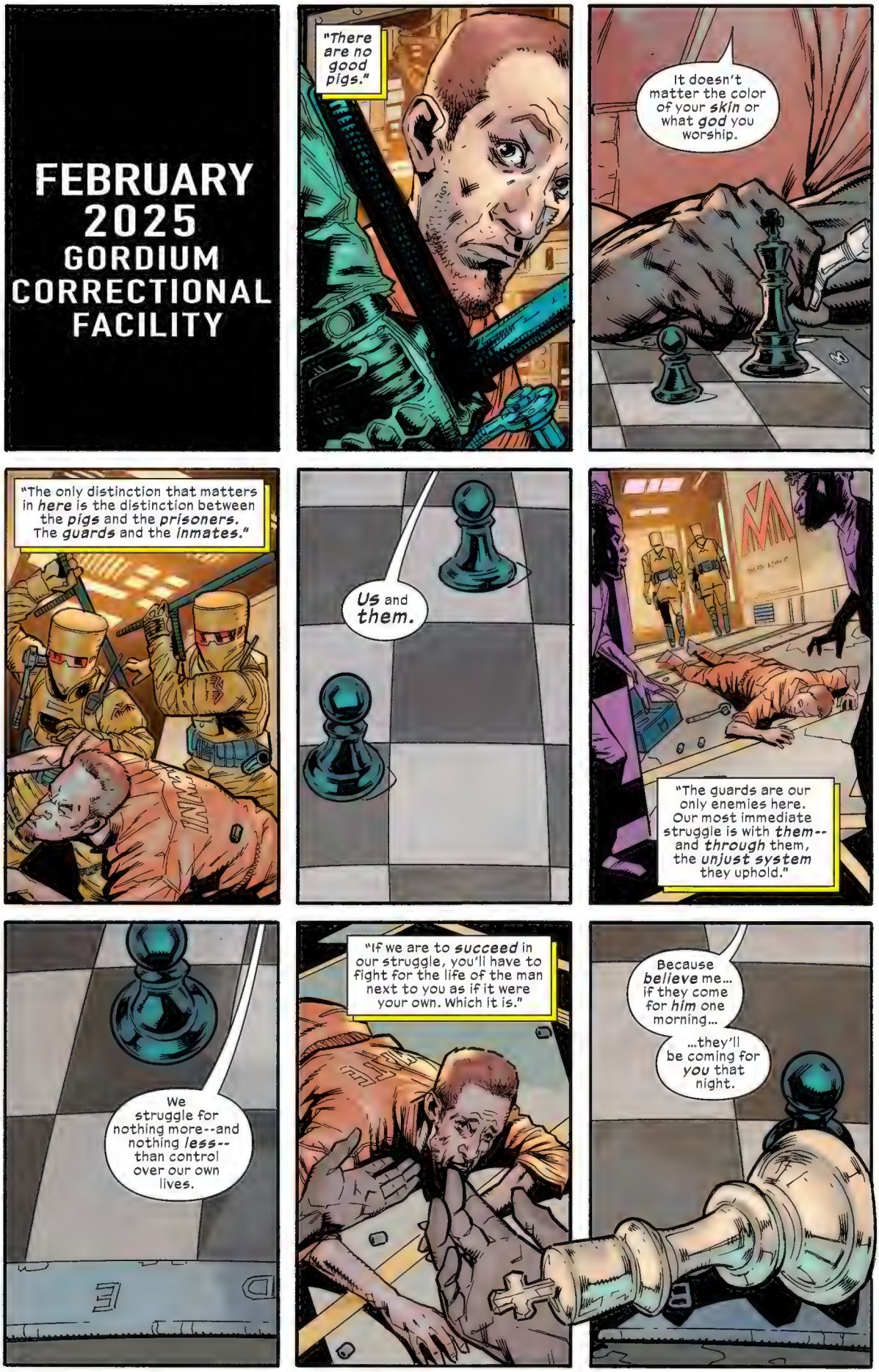
It's just a reading gr--ugh!!!


[redacted]

You're a troublemaker. A dangerous element.
It's in your file.

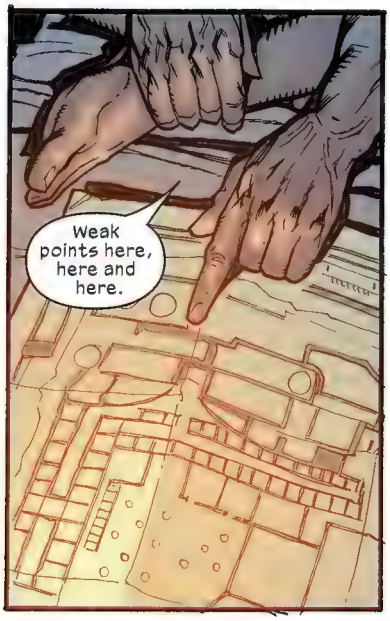

It's been in your file since you were born.

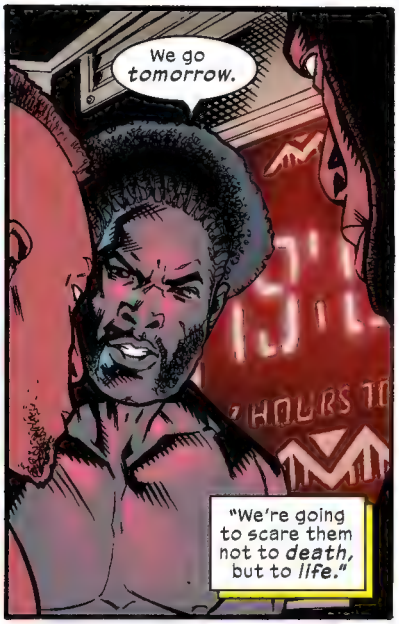
Stupid convicts ~~shuffle~~ never learn.


FEBRUARY 2025
GORDIUM CORRECTIONAL FACILITY
"There are no good pigs."
It doesn't matter the color of your skin or what god you worship.
"The only distinction that matters in here is the distinction between the pigs and the prisoners. The guards and the inmates."
Us and them.
"The guards are our only enemies here. Our most immediate struggle is with them-- and through them, the unjust system they uphold."
We struggle for nothing more--and nothing less-- than control over our own lives.
"If we are to succeed in our struggle, you'll have to fight for the life of the man next to you as if it were your own. Which it is."
Because believe me... if they come for him one morning...
...they'll be coming for you that night.

JANUARY 2024
SEAGATE PENITENTIARY
How many times does that make in the infirmary for Cage since he got here?
CRACKLLLE
I lost count. He musta broke every bone in his body a dozen times by now!
SSZZZT
?
They say he's unbreakable.
"[redacted]. No one's unbreakable."

FEBRUARY 2025
GORDIUM CORRECTIONAL FACILITY





JANUARY
2024
SEAGATE
PENITENTIARY
Cage...
Luke Cage...
...this is for you.
...ionic catalyst that will allow you to gain unbreakable skin and unbelievable strength...
...exercise in creating a society that could be perfectly directed and controlled...
...together, we will free the world.
CAGE

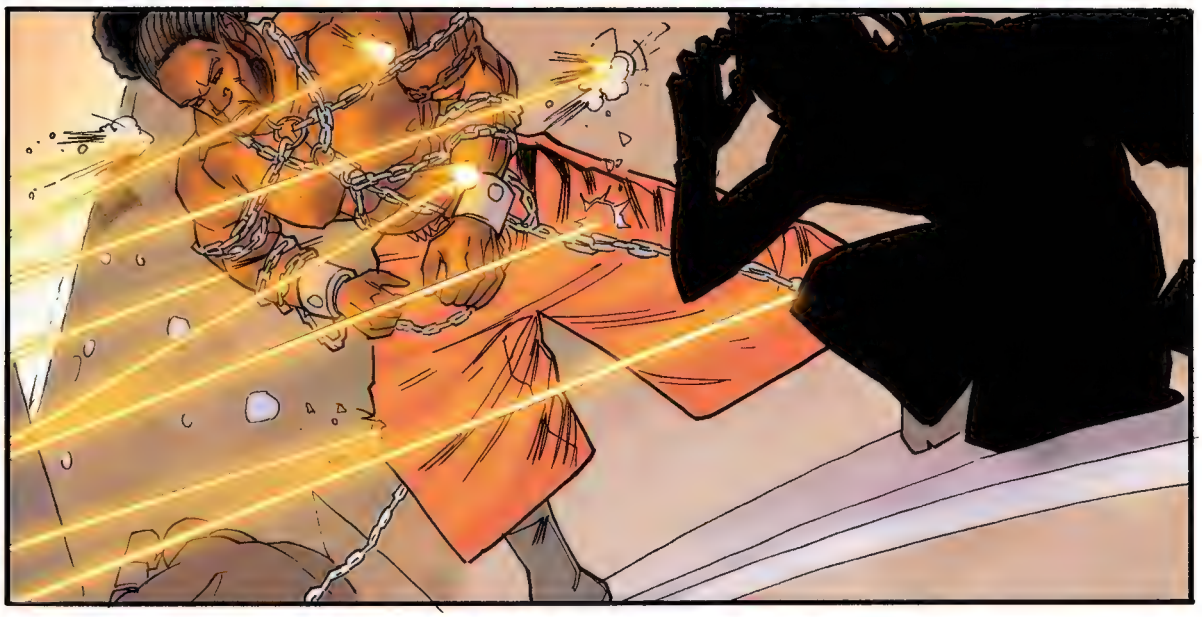
FEBRUARY 2025
GORDIUM CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

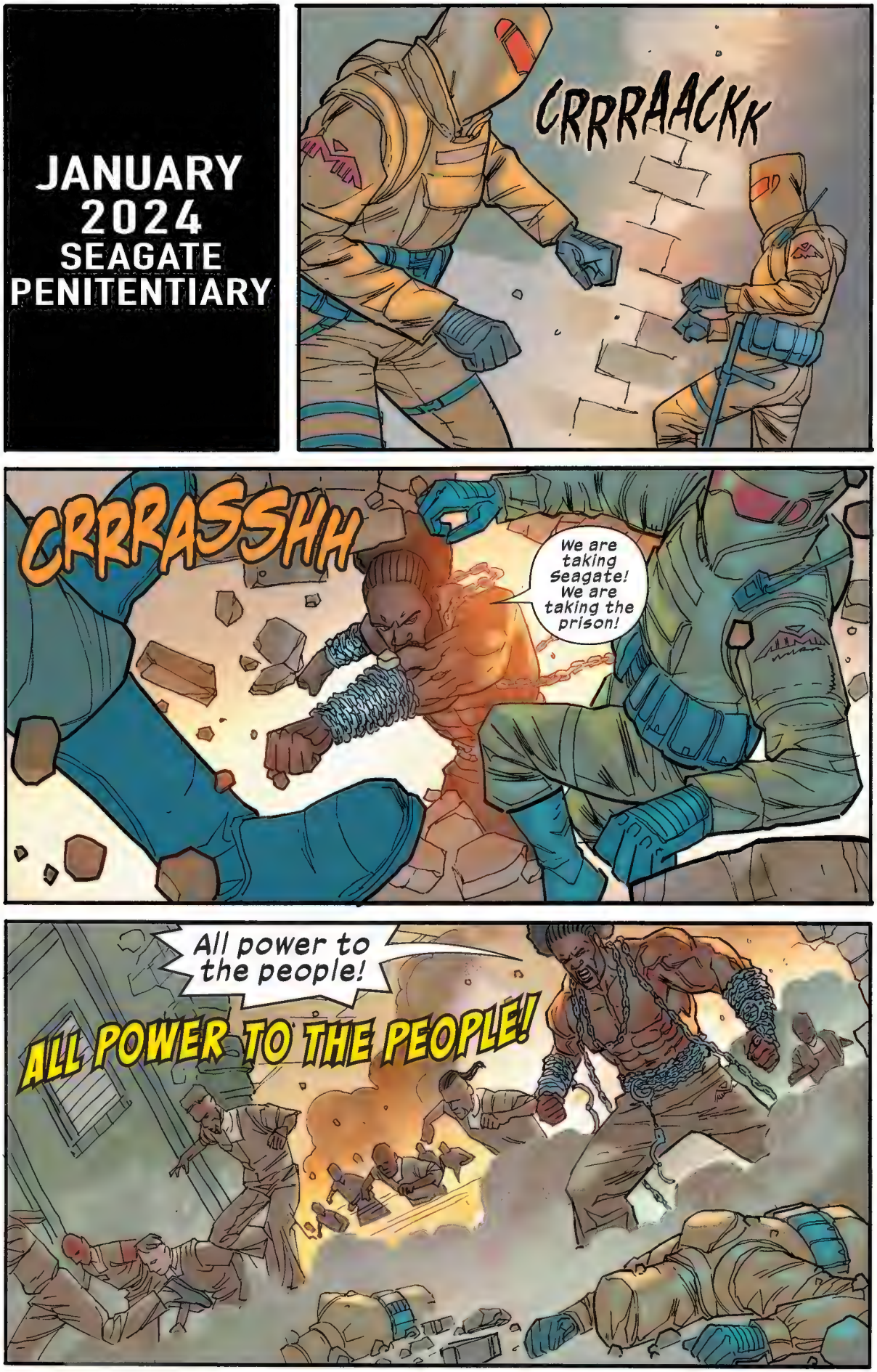
Just because you break a law doesn't make you a criminal. And you don't have to break a law to *be* a criminal.
A criminal is just something you *are.*

PLEASE STAY STILL
Something you *were.* See, in cases like this--*attempted escapes, failed riots*--it's strict Midas policy to use *lethal force.* To discourage recidivism.
I wouldn't be doing my job if I didn't fill you with holes, *convict.*

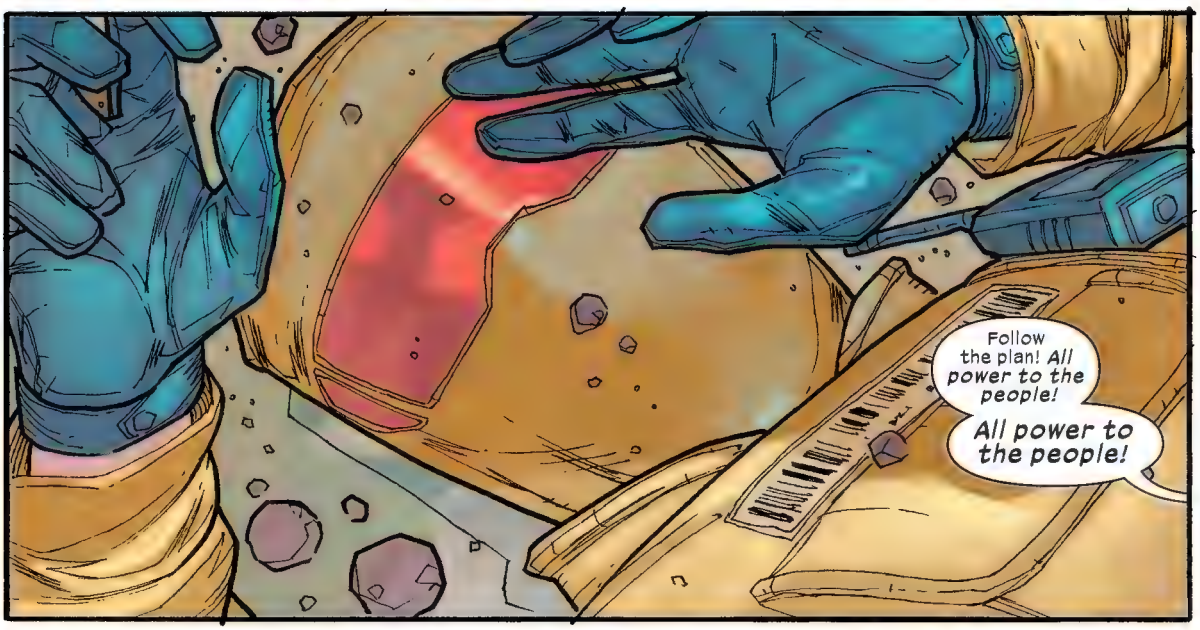
JANUARY
2024
SEAGATE
PENITENTIARY
They stole your future.
Robbed you of your destiny.
Do you want it back?

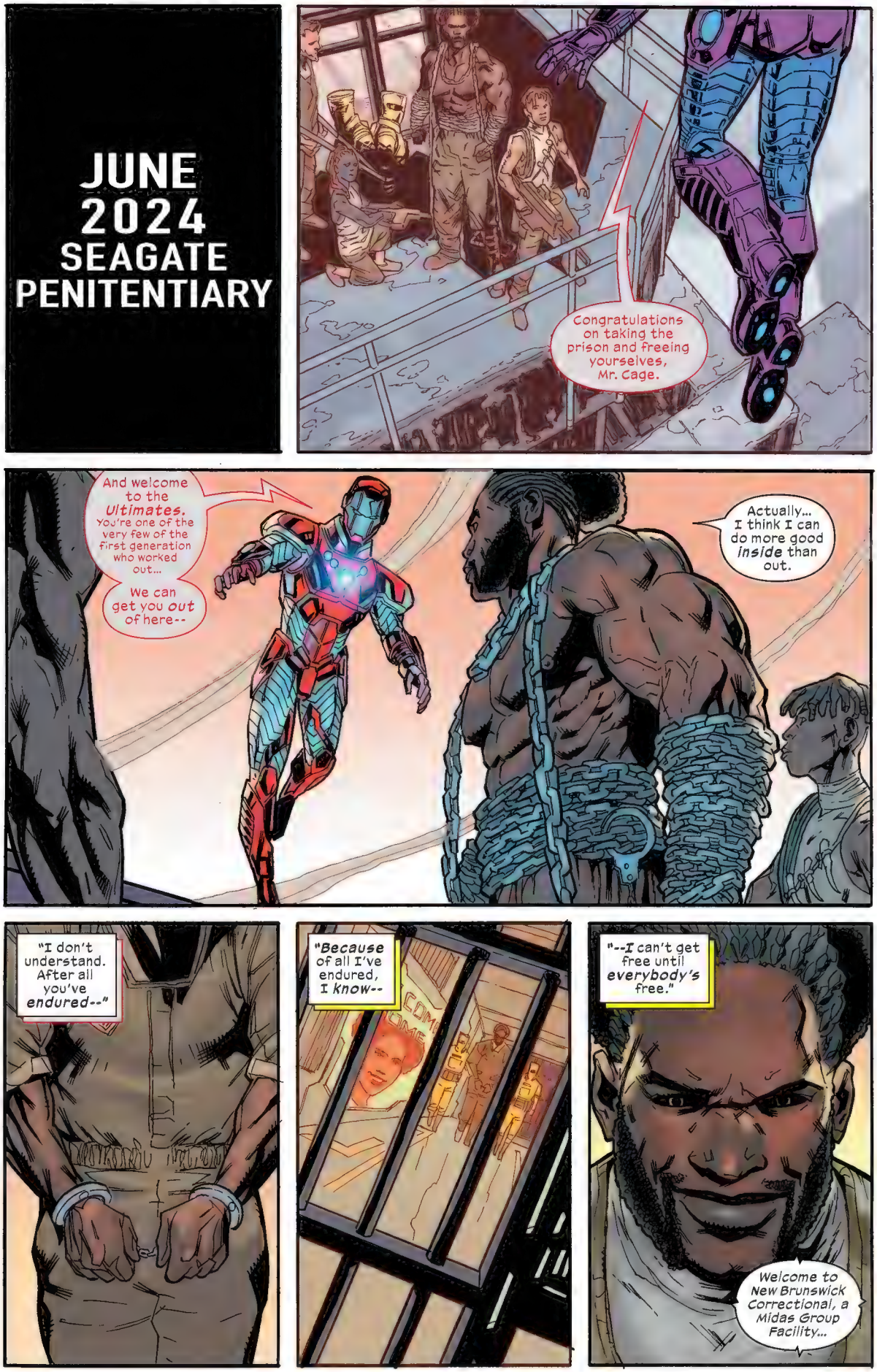
FEBRUARY 2025
GORDIUM CORRECTIONAL FACILITY




JANUARY
2024
SEAGATE
PENITENTIARY
CRRRAACKK
CRRRASSHH
We are taking Seagate! We are taking the prison!
All power to the people!
ALL POWER TO THE PEOPLE!

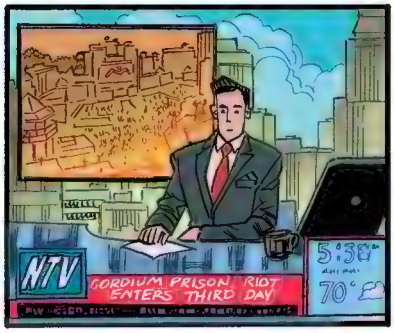
FEBRUARY 2025
GORDIUM CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

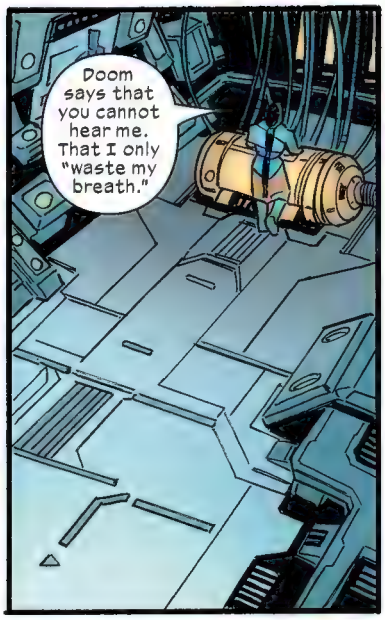



JUNE
2024
SEAGATE
PENITENTIARY
Congratulations on taking the prison and freeing yourselves, Mr. Cage.
And welcome to the *Ultimates.* You're one of the very few of the first generation who worked out...
We can get you *out* of here--
Actually... I think I can do more good *inside* than out.
"I don't understand. After all you've *endured--*"
"*Because* of all I've endured, I *know--*
"*--I* can't get free until *everybody's* free."
Welcome to New Brunswick Correctional, a Midas Group Facility...

ALL POWER
TO THE
PEOPLE
FEBRUARY 2025
GORDIUM
CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

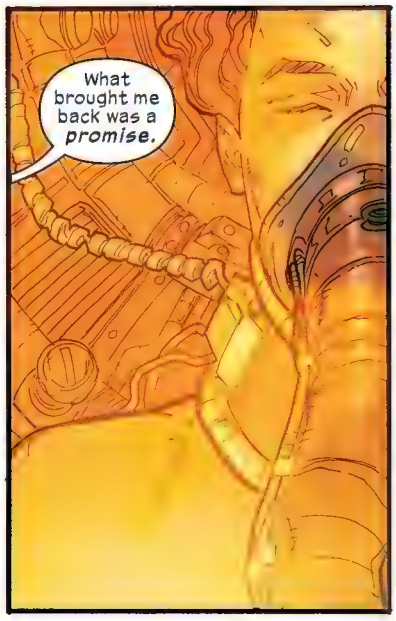
FEBRUARY 2025
TRISKELION SATELLITE

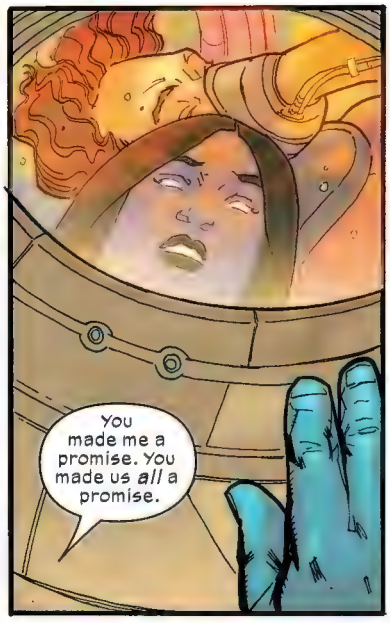


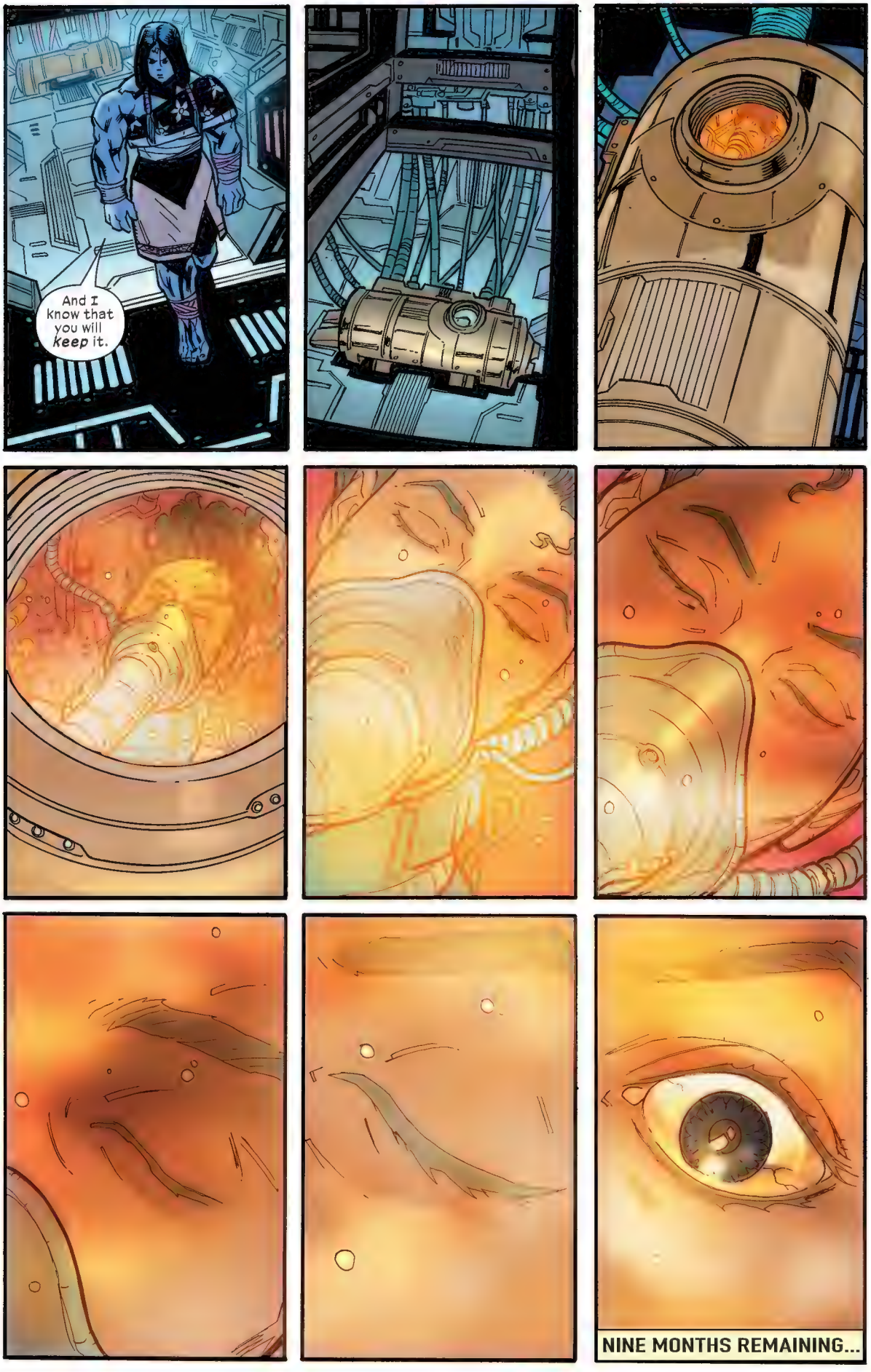


I wanted to tell you... whatever you are feeling, Tony. Whatever *pain,* whatever *torment.* Whatever desire to *escape.*
Stay strong. It will *pass.*

I know. When I began my...*transformation,* I spent *weeks* listening to my bones *break* and *re-form,* my flesh tear itself apart and grow back. *Again* and *again...*
I threw up my own lungs, felt new organs grow and rearrange themselves inside me. *My belly was a pit of snakes and agony.*



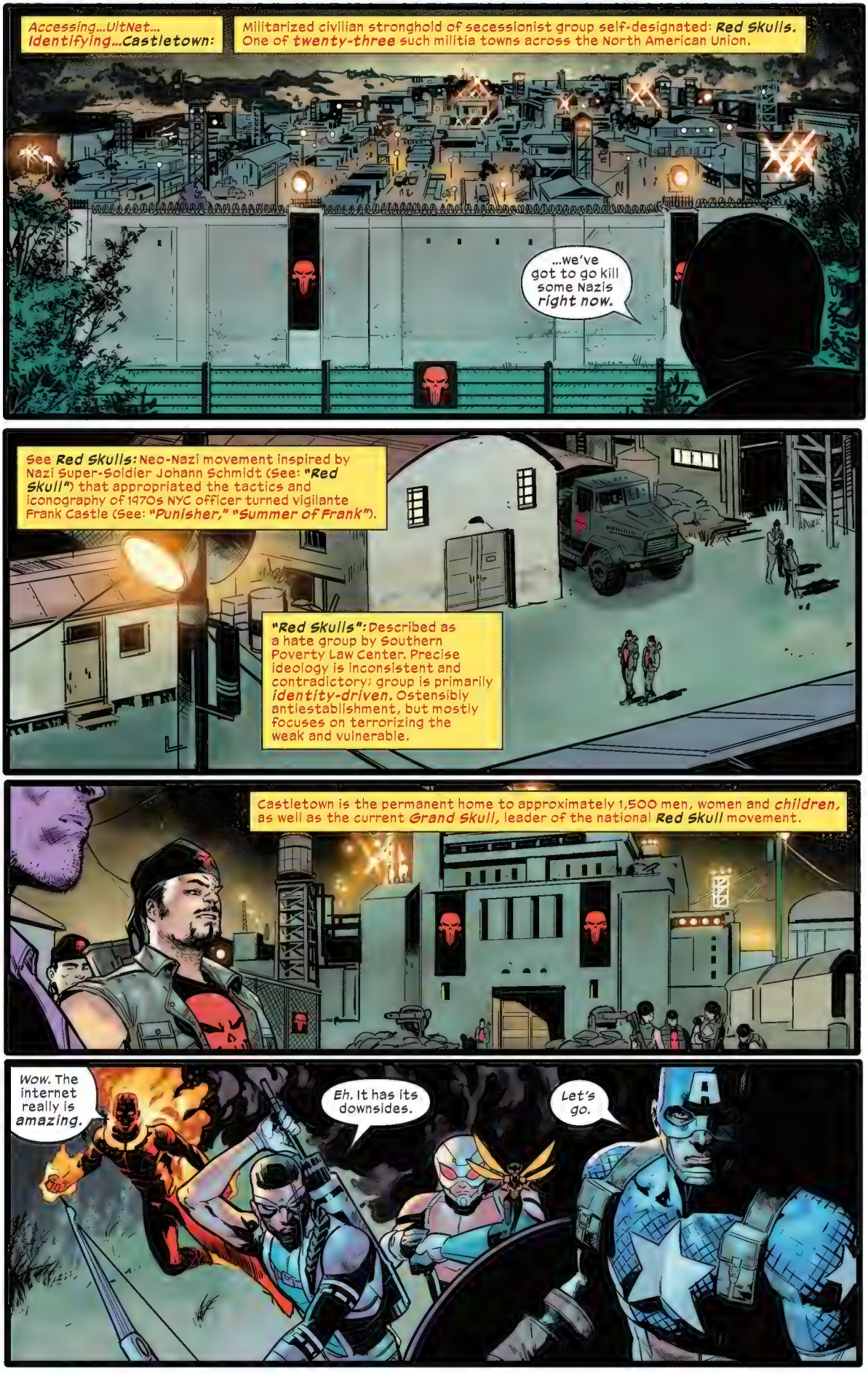



And I know that you will *keep* it.
NINE MONTHS REMAINING...

THE ULTIMATES 10

Accessing...
45.04.30.198.hrt...
Acht--!
Acheeeaaurgh!
Hrrgghhhhh--
"I thought Hitler killed himself?"

That was just the *cover story.* The Soviets were threatening a superhuman arms race and screaming about "illegal deployment overseas"...
Back then, we had this thing called *politics.*
So...how'd it feel? I mean...*killing Hitler...*
How did it *feel...?*
My brain isn't the world's oldest computer, but it's *close.* In the old days, I had to manually erase memories so it wouldn't slow down and seize up under the weight of all that *history.*
I gave up my *medal of honor* and the memory of *getting* that medal of honor. I gave up good friends, good years, and most memories of my brilliant father, *Doctor Horton.*
For a while, I played the piano, but even *that* had to go.
But *that* memory...that memory I keep in *full color* and *high definition.* I go back to it *again* and *again.*
It keeps me *warm.*
All right, enough reminiscing about the good old days of killing Nazis...


Accessing...UltNet...
Identifying...Castletown:
Militarized civilian stronghold of secessionist group self-designated: Red Skulls. One of twenty-three such militia towns across the North American Union.
...we've got to go kill some Nazis right now.
See Red Skulls: Neo-Nazi movement inspired by Nazi Super-Soldier Johann Schmidt (See: "Red Skull") that appropriated the tactics and iconography of 1970s NYC officer turned vigilante Frank Castle (See: "Punisher," "Summer of Frank").
"Red Skulls": Described as a hate group by Southern Poverty Law Center. Precise ideology is inconsistent and contradictory; group is primarily identity-driven. Ostensibly antiestablishment, but mostly focuses on terrorizing the weak and vulnerable.
Castletown is the permanent home to approximately 1,500 men, women and children, as well as the current Grand Skull, leader of the national Red Skull movement.
Wow. The internet really is amazing.
Eh. It has its downsides.
Let's go.

What's going on here?
Tony? You're supposed to be in surgery.
You should be resting.
It's...it's not too bad as long as I h-h--ahh!--have something to focus on.
I am.
Without... without anesthesia?
ZZRRTT
It's--hurk!--fine. The Immortus Engine is keeping me stable.
So what are you doing out there, Steve?
I don't have time to get you up to speed. You can follow along the live feeds if you want, but I'm in command here.
Accessing...25.03.05.842.hrt
Jim Hammond Real-Time Mission Report
Tone: Analytical/Direct
--ruled out a frontal assault for the same reason that Stane and Stark never stormed the Castles...

...for the same reason the Council won't touch them:
They brought their kids.
The Ultimates are not baby killers, whatever they say about us on the news. We can't take the risk.
So this is a stealth mission.
Huh?
Wh-what?
Oh [redacted]!
(Kids.)

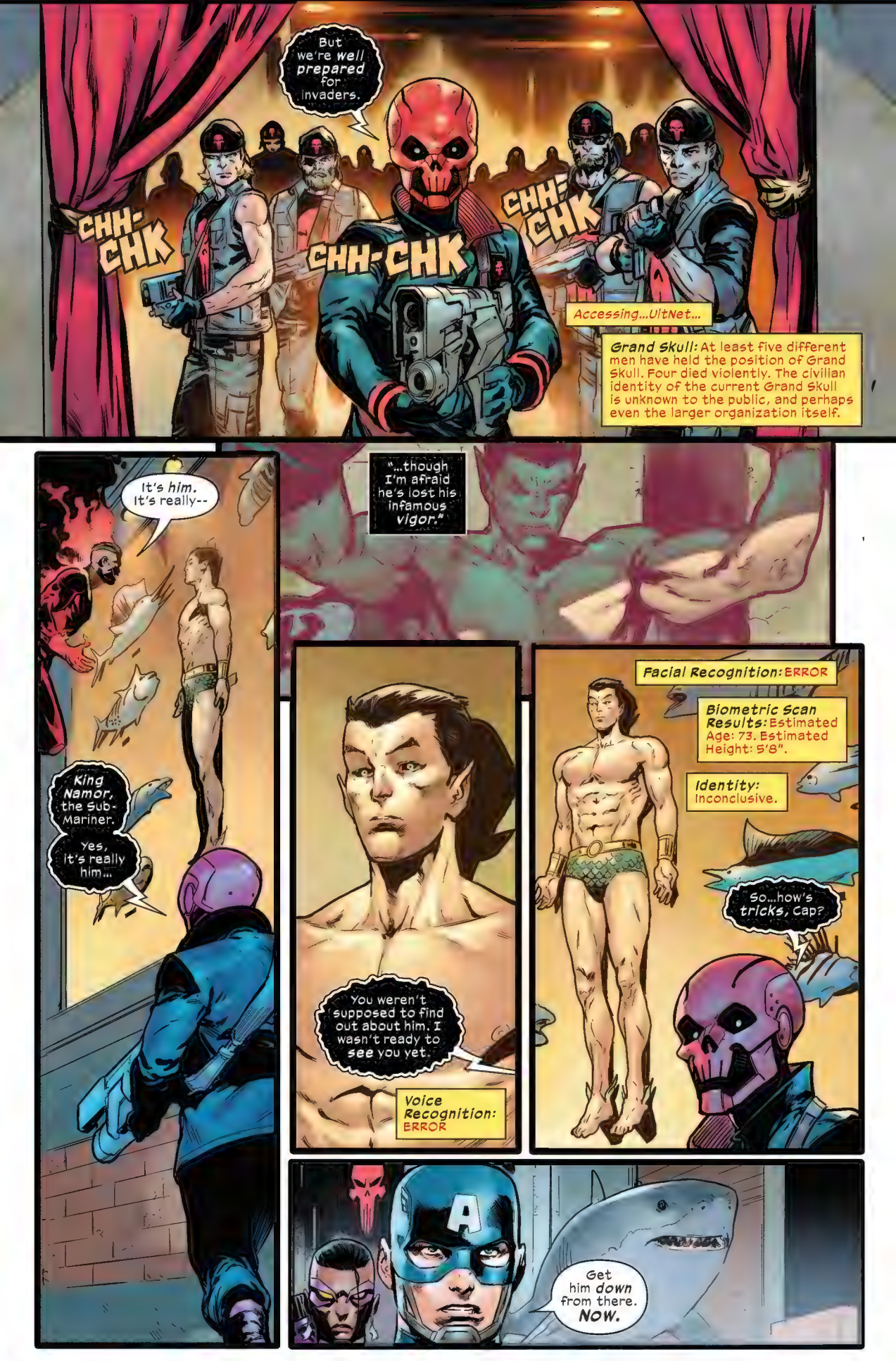
Hey, you hear that?
Giant-Man and Wasp are perfect for this sort of operation. On paper.
Hear what?
Pym Particles give them both the ability to shrink as well as grow.
Wasp is a natural. Smart but not neurotic, confident but not cocky.
It's like she's been at this for years.
Like...like a tiny voice saying, "You can do this, Hank."
Who's Ha--akk--!
But her partner, Giant-Man, is another story.
Geoff, man, the voice... I--I think it's throwing up in my ear!
He's got a big heart, but it's just not in this kind of work.
Hank is always second-guessing himself. Hesitating when he shouldn't.
I-is this the right spot? Dang perspective shift... I'm all disoriented...
BANG BANG BANG
I'm all right, I'm all right...
It'll get him killed one day. Probably soon.

Hawkeye never hesitates.
The trick is making sure they're pointed in the right direction.
Their quiver fabricates noise-canceling knockout arrows.
The men don't even whisper as they fall.
The Red Skulls have nothing to do with the Council or the Maker. They're not a priority.
I've received information that connects this organization to H.A.N.D.
And Nazis are always a priority.
It's all one fight, Tony.
It's actually thousands of them, Charli.

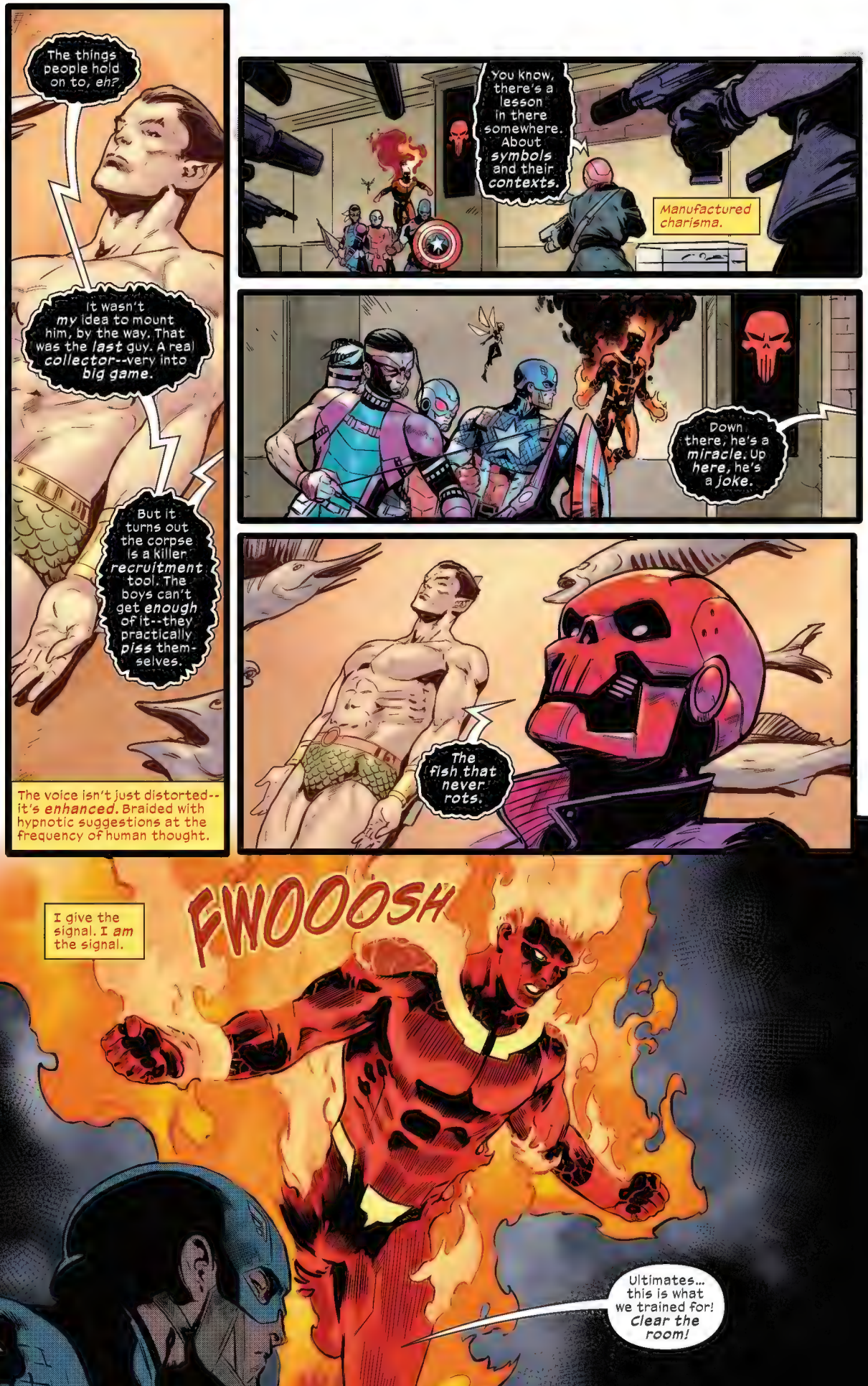
Steve doesn't argue. He *never* argues.
Answer me, Cap!
Whenever possible, Captain America lets his *actions* answer *for* him.
Get some *rest*, Tony.
I stick to a smolder, spewing suppressive smoke as we approach our target.
Castle Alpha-One is up ahead.
Good. Lay it on *thick*, Jim.
Of course it's a priority, Tony.
If you'd seen what *we'd* seen, you'd know it was a priority.

But even so, seeing is no longer believing.
What's--?
Fire...?
Reality is so easily doctored now. Nothing is what it seems.
Everything can mean anything. The truth must be verified by hand.
So here we are, fighting Nazis with laser guns.
It strikes my upgraded sense of humor as funny, but I don't laugh.
Accessing... 42.06.21.298.hrt
Some things never change...

According to what I found, it should be--
SUB-MARINER
The gang's all here! It's an Invaders reunion!


But we're well prepared for invaders.
CHH-CHK
CHH-CHK
CHH-CHK
Accessing...UltNet...
Grand Skull: At least five different men have held the position of Grand Skull. Four died violently. The civilian identity of the current Grand Skull is unknown to the public, and perhaps even the larger organization itself.
It's him. It's really--
King Namor, the Sub-Mariner.
Yes, it's really him...
"...though I'm afraid he's lost his infamous vigor."
You weren't supposed to find out about him. I wasn't ready to see you yet.
Voice Recognition: ERROR
Facial Recognition: ERROR
Biometric Scan Results: Estimated Age: 73. Estimated Height: 5'8".
Identity: Inconclusive.
So...how's tricks, Cap?
Get him down from there. NOW.

How did you--? Did you kill--?
Of course not.
"The certificate of authenticity says his death was a political matter. An underwater coup of some kind.
"The Mad King was overthrown according to Atlantean custom and executed according to Atlantean law. As were his many wives, allies and heirs.
"But the body became a holy site--religions sprung up around it like seaweed.
"Oppressed Atlanteans making pilgrimages and problems.
"The new regime down there didn't like it, so they exiled their former king after they killed him, which has to be some kind of first.
"It doesn't decay, see? They say...the worshippers say it isn't just his super-dense tissue. They claim the ocean's micro-organisms refuse to eat the body.
"That, even dead, every living thing down there recognizes its rightful king."


The things people hold on to, eh?
It wasn't my idea to mount him, by the way. That was the last guy. A real collector--very into big game.
But it turns out the corpse is a killer recruitment tool. The boys can't get enough of it--they practically piss themselves.
The voice isn't just distorted--it's enhanced. Braided with hypnotic suggestions at the frequency of human thought.
You know, there's a lesson in there somewhere. About symbols and their contexts.
Manufactured charisma.
Down there, he's a miracle. Up here, he's a joke.
The fish that never rots.
I give the signal. I am the signal.
FWOOOSH
Ultimates... this is what we trained for! Clear the room!

We move precisely, calmly, *naturally.* Reinforcing strengths, compensating for weaknesses.
We move like a *finely tuned machine.*
And I feel-- It feels like--
Room is clear!
Somebody get him *down* from there!

I'm going to break open your skull. Maybe more than one.
Now wait. Wait a minute.
You know, you could learn a lot from us. How we operate.
I mean, we both preach violent revolution against the world government, but we've been at it a lot longer than you have.
Accessing...UltNet... Headline: Red Skull militia massacres caravan of Inhuman refugees on southern border.
You're racists, thugs and murderers. We're nothing like you.
What do you give them?
Well, you're right about that. We've got more money, better branding and a much larger membership.
We give them an enemy. A symbol. We give them something to believe in and something to die for.
Here's one of our "true believers" now! His name is John Walker.
John's been a devoted follower of Red Skull content for years, ever since he was a boy. Sixteen months ago, he came to me with a metal box, a message from Tony Stark and a vial of Super-Soldier serum, asking me what to do.
You know what I said?

I said, "Kick their [redacted] heads in, John!"
Rgghhhh!!!
FWOOOOSH
Aiiieeeee!!!
Jesus, Jim.
Hmpph.

ZZTT
You are not the Red Skull! I killed Johann Schmidt over 75 years ago!
Take that thing off and give up this charade! You're done!
CRZZZRT
Guh!!!
This is Tony Stark to Grand Skull. I am transmitting directly to your... uh, skull.
In the last twenty minutes, I've scrubbed all known Red Skull content from the internet, crashed all related platforms, and drained all your secret bank accounts. Yes, even that one.
I needed something to focus on.
Good gravy, it looks like you've got me! Captain America's done it again!
CLICK
But I'm like you now, Cap. More than a man--I'm a symbol.
And symbols don't die. They just come back different.
TAP TAP TAP
It was good to see you, Steve.

The funeral was small, for a *king*.
Of those present, only Steve and I had really known him.
Not much was said, but what was said was true.
He fought like hell and he was our brother, as much as any man in Arlington.
But the ocean was his only country. That's where he belongs.
So now we give the sea back her *king*.
May he inspire many a revolution, even in death.

Accessing...
Jim Hammond Private Thought Log
Tone: Poetic/Reflective

I am thinking: About death. Mainly my own.

I am standing: In the antiseptic darkness of the Triskelion satellite, hours after Namor's funeral, trying to remember how I "died."

I remember: One minute, I am walking down Avenue A in the bright light of 1948. Next, I am waking up in a warehouse in 2024. In between there's nothing and a whole new world.

I am looking: Out a window, 1,200 miles above the earth. It's night in North America, and on its surface, a million pricks of manmade light blink in the darkness, like signal fires.

I wonder (not for the first time): What happened to me in 1948? How did I get here? Who can I trust?

I feel: Disturbed. The details of my death have been *manually deleted*. The Maker leaves us nothing, not even our own minds. All he leaves us are questions without answers.

I remember: It is 1939, and I am standing in a vacuum tube. Doctor Horton tries to speak to me through the glass, but the sound does not carry. I watch his mouth move silently for days, trying to understand. The first word I hear my creator speak is: "Behold!" I immediately burst into flame.

I realize: I have not slept since my rebirth. I no longer need to. In the warehouse, I slept for 76 years, 3 months, 12 days, 10 hours, 34 minutes and 17 seconds. I will never sleep again. Instead...

I explore: While others rest, make love or pretend to live their lives, I turn my mind into a narrow stream of electrons and swim through the sum total of human knowledge. At 98% the speed of light, I move between wires, servers, satellites.

I marvel: At what I find out there. Love letters and death threats, videos of kittens and executions. *The best and worst of people.*

I think: *The internet is mankind's shadow made of light.*

I bring up: The photos I found on the Red Skull social network. In the photos, obviously intoxicated young men hold Namor's corpse over their heads like a trophy.

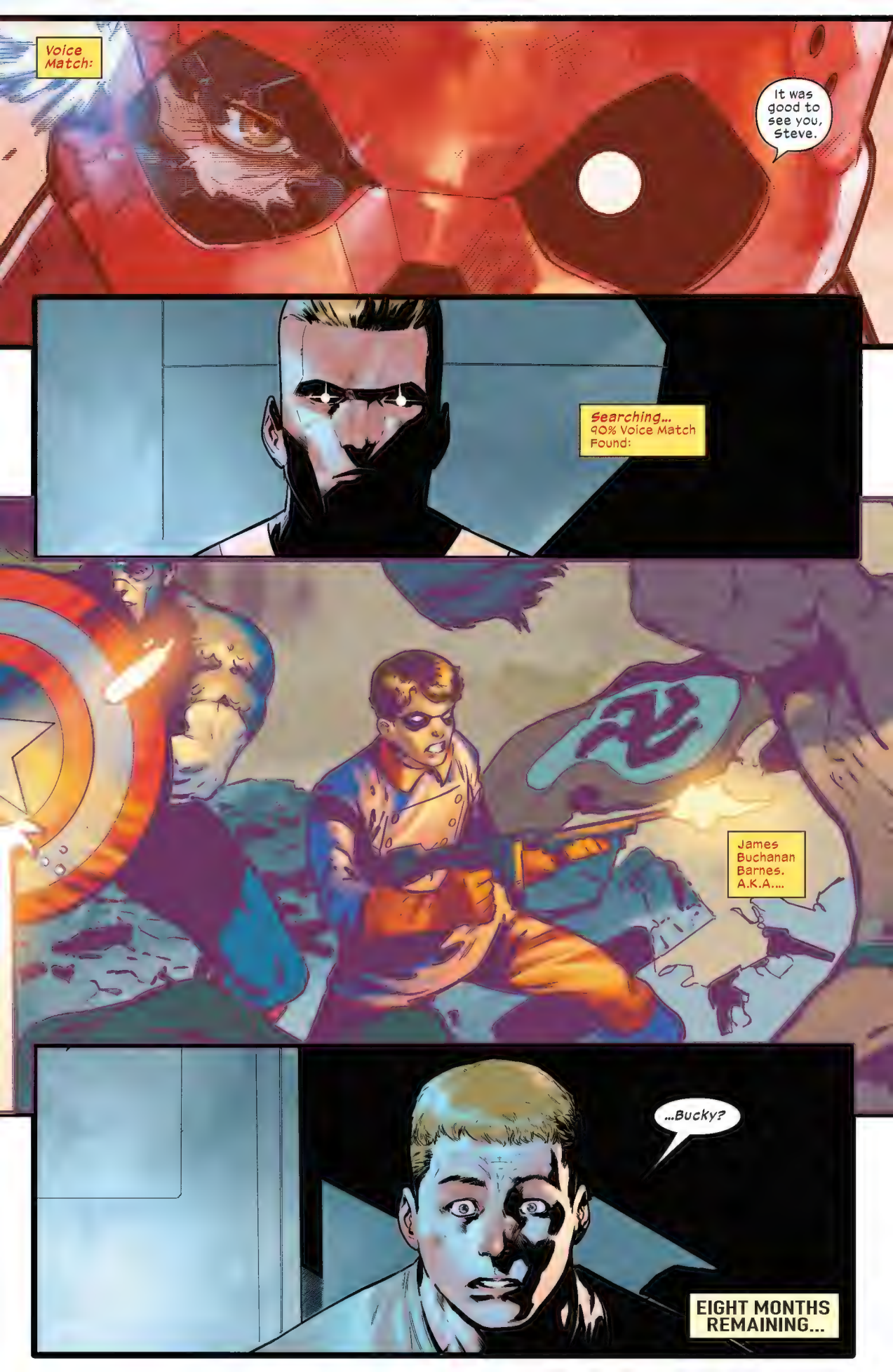
I cannot stop thinking about: What the Grand Skull said about symbols and their recurrence. In my nighttime explorations, I've collected dozens of newspaper clippings, blurry photographs, second- and thirdhand accounts from the 1950s, '60s and '70s. All containing claims of "a flying man on fire."

I ask myself (not for the first time): What does it all mean? Have there been others like me? Are they also locked in a warehouse somewhere, waiting to be rekindled? Is it some scam I don't understand? Or is it the world trying to light the fire of its own liberation?

I am on fire: With questions without answers.

End Private Thought Log

Accessing...25.03.06.931.hrt
Jim Hammond Real-Time Report
--Addendum--
Tone: Disquieted/Disturbed
Steve hasn't slept or spoken since the funeral. He just sits in his room with the light burning all night.
As a result of my cognitive upgrade, I have gotten much better at reading human emotional cues. I now recognize that Steve is deeply troubled.
As am I. But why?
It's not just Namor. It was something the Grand Skull said...not the mind-control distortion, but what it was hiding...
It was good to see you, Steve.
Something familiar.


Voice Match:
It was good to see you, Steve.
Searching...
90% Voice Match Found:
James Buchanan Barnes. A.K.A....
...Bucky?
EIGHT MONTHS REMAINING...

THE
ULTIMATES
11

To cave-kingdom Nidavellir they came, lightning-leaping world to world
Brace of God-Things, Celestial-Exiles
Divine insurgents, "Big Ideas," primal forces--pre-urban legends, their existence outlawed by Universe's new regime
There was Thor, Thunder-Lord, Hammer-holder, lightning-tongued, head encompassing every storm
And by his side, sharp-tipped Sif, sword-goddess, warden, war-woman whose fleet feet forever failed to meet the floor

Nidavellir means fields below
Home of Dwarves and divine industry
Once a race of carefree craftsmen
All bosses, artisans, solitary self-starters
Now reworked into overworked factory workers
Poor, pathetic paycheck-collectors,
Uneasy employees
Each with one job, forever
All assembled in a line

Sticking to shadows
Sif spots **Brokk** and **Eitri**
Bickering Builder-Brothers, Mjoinir-makers, wonder-workers
And puts in a **special order:**
"Two cloaks to render movements mysterious, **invisible**, to hide comings and goings from even All-Seeing eyes."
Brokk and Eitri, longtime Loki-Loathers, agree
But not for free
They demand a fee
They say times are hard in stone
("this debt-concept is really heavy")
The price is steep but fair
So Sif and Thor go and snare
A bird made of Air
And a bear with flowing maiden's hair
And the night-sky constellation called "The Little Heir"
Plus, when all is said and done, Loki Lyesmith's head.
This time, we'll throw in his neck for free.
And if you say to me, "false, dismissed
No such things exist"
I'll reply
"Now you know WHY.
Because Thor and Sif resist."

The cloaks were crucial
for **He** had spies
and eyes,
of all color, shape and size.
The fox, the empty box, the infectious pox
all tell-all to **Loki**,
Unfair King of Asgard
Supreme Commander of Skies
Thin-Lipped Lord of Lies
Formerly fast wit somewhat slower
mind's edge dulled
Puppet-god, puppet-fraud,
nowadays numbskulled
=Buurrppp!=
Every night gets drunk
on dwarf-made poets-mead,
easy-breathing epic into being
Inventing flawless rhyme and meter
on the fly
Holding court
Everyone cheering, terrified.
Too much of a bad thing, a tired bit
In other words, full of his own [redacted].
At his right side
Odin's severed head,
stinking, saintly, speared.
Shouting nonsense, portents, nightmare
Preserved from germs
with herbs and verbs
At his left
dewy **Idunn**, youth-in-chains
basket of overflowing immortal apples and
something new, **broken**
in baby-face

Looking down she saw
At foot of All-Father's throne
throng of ancients--
unfavored immortals
Looking every day their age
Begging for another bite of life.
Some were enemies
Others allies
Loki's favor being fickle
Most cruel,
quixotic of the gods.

On scene, unseen,
Thor and Sif survey the field
Feeling angry, omni-impotent
Gods full of useless wrath,
"What's been done here is obscene!"
"How could we all just yield?"
Frost Giants everywhere
Ice-army occupying Asgard
The dead His dread policemen
On loan from daughter-Queen Hela
Who had plenty of people
Happy to help
In exchange her assistance bought
That haughty hall Valhalla,
A prize, for Hela,
long sought

It was the same story everywhere.
Especially here, the origin of stories
Alfheim, land of Light Elves
Source of creativity, divine inspiration
Long ago, they made the transition
From art to content
(Which are the same--
That's an official position)
Censors in place.
Backed by black-and-white bosses
Icy efficiency, small-souled purposes
Noted to death
A lot of uninspired perspiration
Like smokers' vessels, a narrowing
Of what is possible
To think
To want
To dream.

Next came Vanaheim
Fields of fertile lifelords
The Vanir, dirt forever under fingernails
Gods of harvest, hearth, birth
Thor and Sif came recruiting, constituting
gods' own guerrilla army
To lay low Loki Laufeyson,
And free nine worlds, one by one.
But the Vanir weren't so receptive
"Not to say that Loki is right, not me--"
"No, of course not, but we--"
"He's mostly left us alone, you see--"
"It's not our fight--we're free"
"Not much has changed for us
Since the beginning of time
We still plant the trees
And pollinate with bees
And sometimes we become the breeze"
"Plus, it's not just a rumor
a lot of us can see the future
Like a story passed down the other way
And we gotta tell ya, trust us
it's better to obey."
Thor and Sif, united, slighted
call them names, short-sighted,
Unenlightened, fight-frightened
Sacred cowards, or worse, collaborators
Craven, uncultured cultivators
But it did no good
Convinced no one they should
Join the righteous cause
"It's safer to just follow the laws"

So the Vanir retreat, leave
back to leaves, loam,
gradual green grasses
Whizzing through wheat as wind
Expressed, once more, primarily,
through the fornication of fruit flies...
The formations of finches...
In figs ripening,
rising like welts...
As so often before
Thor and Sif are then alone
Instead of stony cell their surroundings,
It is endless, singing, stinging
Springing spring
Duty had driven them
Riven them
Given them everything,
For golden, gleaming Asgard
Never needed to be spoken
To be understood
Stood beneath
That duty to a corrupted thing
Their hands running over
The sad curves of their faith
They worshipped each other
There, beneath the hanging bows of ash
He kneeling before her like a temple
A supplicant
Making offerings
They united, intertwined
Like serpents,
Encircling the world.

When she wakes
Hours
Days
Centuries later
Elf, sated, seated
For reasons unknown
finds herself alone
the songs of cicadas
the lush murmur of
green things grown
her only company
Finally, Thor returns
Covered in burns
One hand just cinders
Sulfur-stinking
Somehow shrinking
Unable to meet her eye
"What have you done?"
She asks, not wanting an answer
And god provides
Then they're back to Old ways
Like always
Leaving important things unsaid
All business instead
They still had to make
Dread war on the dead

Some time after
For Loki, **disaster**
(It moves differently in myth--
Month, minute, millennium
They're all mixed up with
each other, blurred, whirred, wordsmithed
In name of pith)
Thor struck **Jotunheim**
The attack a surprise
His roar was "War!"
As he brought down the skies
Realm of Frost Giants
Loki's core constituency
With hammer and lightning felling
Acres, massacres on massive scale
Millions against one
But one **won**
And when deed was done
Left behind strange new mountain range
de-composed of corpses
Manifestation of Thunder's rage
Visible from Asgard
And these make
Andes look like anthills

But all this action
Was mere distraction
For while Loki returned
Back to fatherland, slaughterland
He left Asgard unguarded
As Loki dealt with distant tiff
In slipped Sif
mind decided on doom
To All-Father's throne room
Bringing brand-new
decorating concept tomb
Gods, giants, the dead
All fell before her knife
Save Idunn golden-head
Still fettered, bound to ground
Basket full of life
She came as breaker of chains
Agent of change
And took youth's innocence
To distant, dim-lit planes

In Niffleheim they hid
Place of primordial darkness
Poison oceans and private continents
Sky so thick with black clouds
Heimdall himself couldn't pierce the shroud
They sat by impossible fire
Fed by the dead
Tended and trimmed by Elf
Waiting for word to spread
They came to him
Few at first
And ancient, bedraggled
Those who'd never sworn
Worn their allegiance on their sleeves
Refused to bend knees
They ate Idunn's delicacy
restoring vigor
Not many in the confederacy
but a start, a flicker

Loki is raging
Rapidly Aging
Unused to time and losses
(the problem with most bosses)
He gathers his banners
His swords, hammers
Summons a rousing speech
But without his mead
Only stammers

Nevertheless, the message is received
They've been too lenient
Allowed themselves to be deceived
Made things too convenient
So they redouble oppression
Suppression, dispossession, aggression
Freedoms, once granted, are revoked
"It's all justified,
We've been provoked!"
Bad times get worse
The gods can hardly believe it
They spit, complain and curse
Too late, they see it

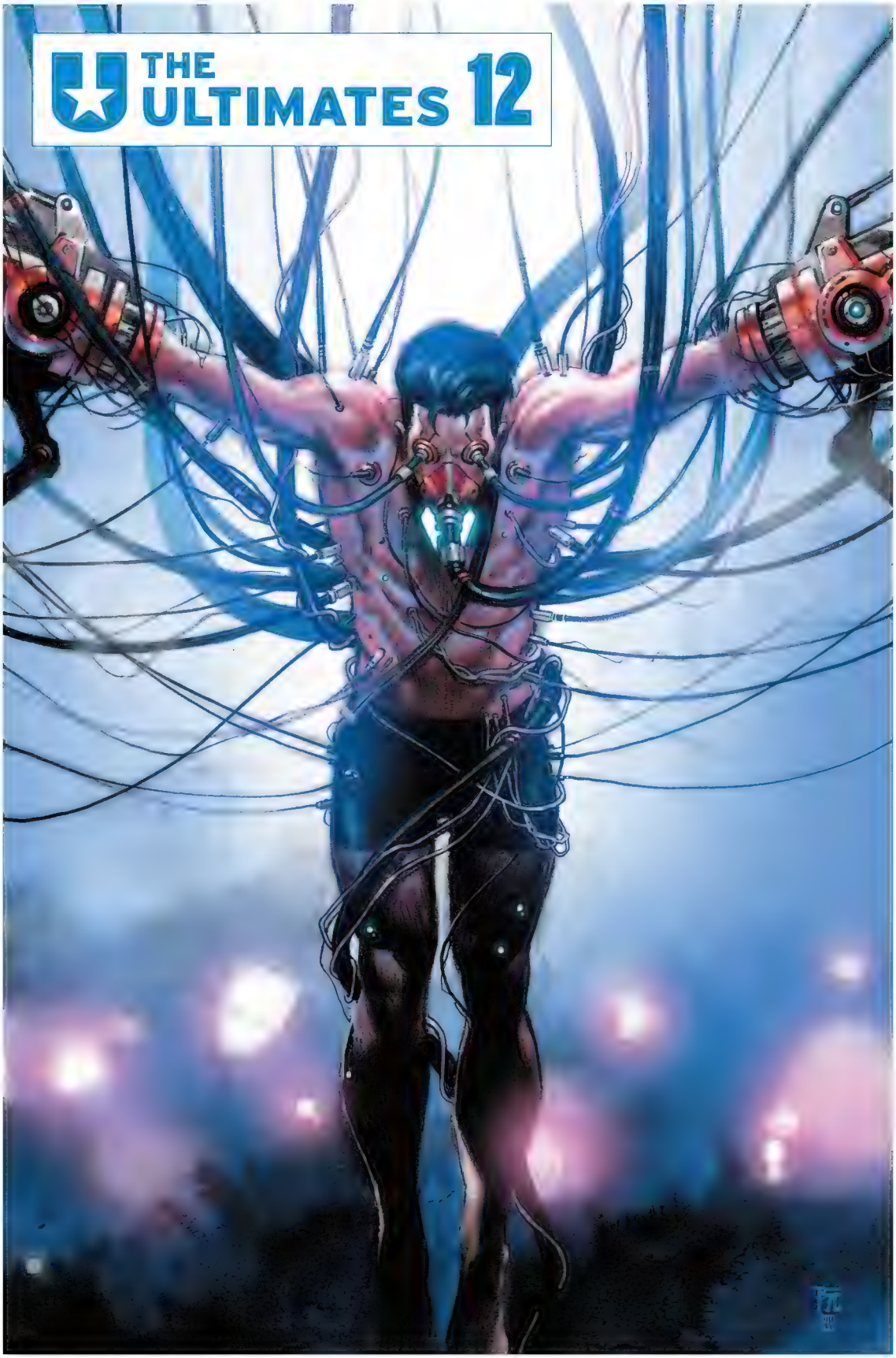
And in Niffleheim they gather
Those who can get free
The wronged, made strong
They finally see
You don't make concessions
To autocrats and their oppressions
You don't make deals
With tyrants
You make war!

But let's rejoin Thor
Before post-embrace
Still smelling of Sif
Walking stiff
Through forests of fire
Over burning bridges
Sailing across seas
that mother suns
Who can say what drove him?
Desperation, inspiration, frustration?
Perhaps a vision
Either way, he'd made a decision
Better flames than chains
He fought fire demons
In caustic legions
the sons of Muspell
fell before the storm
Further and further
He'd come to make a deal
With Flame-Lord Surtur
Muspell's Fiery Crown
Who **approved** his appeal

Burn it all down.

Meanwhile, in the minor realm of Midgard
Home to mortals, Microwaves, and linear time
Starkson, Ironlad, invalid
world's most brilliant boy
hangs high above humanity
21st-century marionette
Held together by nothing but will and wires
Body broken beyond conventional fixing,
He rejects convention
Takes life's last chance at extension
Makes of his heart
A terrible engine
Revamped veins contain
Flow of blood and time
Lab-grown lungs
breathe in air, exhale era
Brain burns with revelation
Sudden sense of elevation
Infinity bares her breasts
Shows him everything
Means to make Lad into Man
"It's too much, it's too much!"
What was, what wasn't
and such
Would drive any man into madness
Wants to scream, but doesn't
Instead shifts engine into low gear
Tells Infinity he's not ready
needs more time
She laughs at his bashfulness, his fear
Then dons her dress and disappears

But something sticks with him
he's concerned
Something he's been wondering about
Trying to figure out
Since he returned
Something that was,
or **was** it?
He calls Doom
to his room
And demands it plain
Explain.
SEVEN MONTHS
REMAINING...


THE
ULTIMATES 12

It's dangerous for me. Talking to you.
You have nothing to worry about. You're protected. Sheltered in the palm of H.A.N.D.
Now... what have you got for me?
Tony... Iron Lad called a meeting.
Director FURY
The entire network? On the satellite?
No. Half of us were there remotely. After what happened in Heaven, they never assemble the entire network all at once.
They've learned.
All right, start from the beginning. What happened at this meeting?

This is what happened.

Tony, what...?
That's my nightmare. How did you get footage of--
Our nightmare, Janet. Remember? We are all--
...meaning to see someone about them, but then I think, "Well, Hank, nobody specializes in terrorist post-traumatic stress or nightmares of Hulks rampaging through Heaven..."
Not just a nightmare.
Tell them, Doom.
Tell them or I will.

Fine.
Tony, what's going on--?
Since I fused the Immortus Engine with my nervous system--
--freezing myself forever in the decisecond before death--
--I've been catching up on what I missed.
The engine allows me to... see through time.
Well, sometimes. I'm still figuring things out.

When I looked back on that day...the day I...
RRRRCRUUNNNCHHHHH
I saw...*two* versions of events, ***superimposed.*** Like two competing signals, one growing ***stronger*** as the other ***faded out.***
One in which Doom got us out *just in time...*
...and one in which he ***didn't.***

Sigh It was all very... *messy.*
By the time I found you... what I found was *unacceptable.*
So I *intervened.*
That *was* what happened. But it didn't *have* to be.
And it isn't what happened *anymore.*
I saved your lives. You are *welcome.*

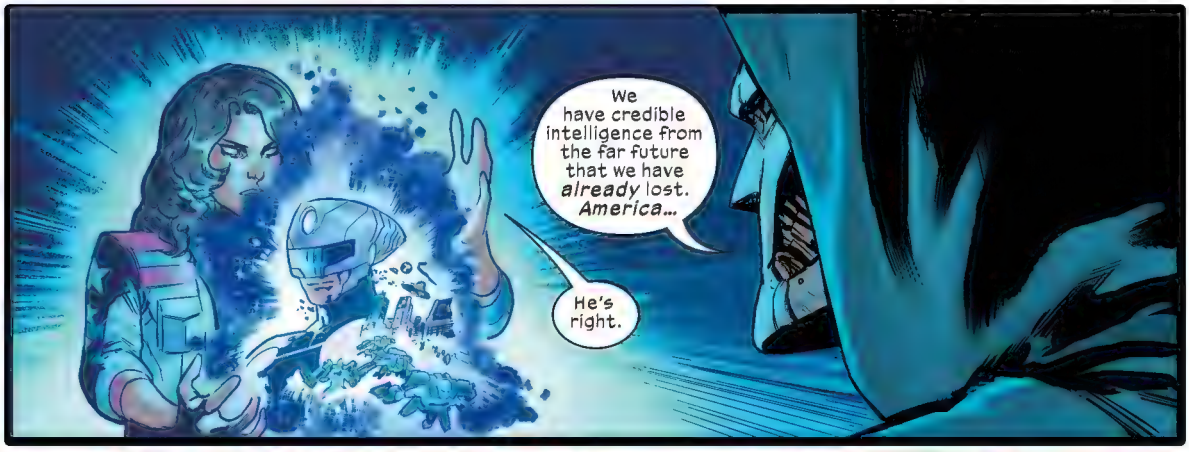
"Welcome"...?
Wait...you're saying th-that really happened? I thought I was all screwed up in the head, man!
We...we died?
That's [redacted] up.
I knew you died, Tony... I knew...
You've been lying to us, Doom. You've been lying to us all. And you broke our agreement--
I saved your lives! I saved the Ultimates! Our agreement? You should be kissing my feet!
Everything I have done, I have done for the cause!
And what about Project 4?

"All that time, supposedly working out 'the correct dose of cosmic energy.' All a *lie*.
"Those poor dead mice."
All that time you've been trying to break through the Maker's barrier. To radically change the past! All behind our backs!
If you want an explanation, I will give it *happily*. But if you seek *contrition*, I am afraid the capacity was long ago cut out of me.
I...am *Doom*. You must accept this, and all it means. As I have.
You're *irresponsible*! You could have destroyed *everything*! You know what happened to the Guardians--you could erase this world!
And what in this world is so worth *saving*?! *Tell me!*

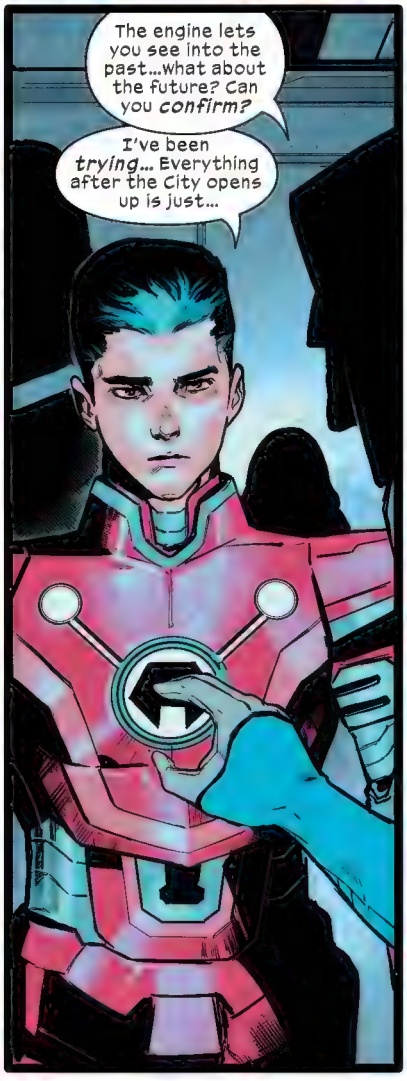
"Fix the world." Those were your words. That is the supposed purpose of the Ultimates. Well, I am trying!
Can you say the same? Can any of you say the same?!
Hold on, rewriting reality? Killing ourselves? Isn't that a little... extreme?
This is not what I agreed to--
I admire the ambition, but did you even have a plan for once you broke through?
Yeah, like how's you getting your family back gonna help the rest of--?
Just tell me: Is that why you took us out after I was--
--after he--?
RUUNNNCH
Were you trying to cover your tracks?

...
Is that really what you think of me?
I don't know what to think. It just seems a bit... *convenient*, doesn't it? I'm the only other one who could have understood what you've been doing.
Why else...why would you let that *happen* to me?
I *tried*, Tony.
It wasn't just separate space/times. I had to save *you* without uncreating *myself*. Or this *version* of myself.
The further away your deaths were from me, the more difficult that became. The more enmeshed your *deaths* became with my *life*.
With every passing second, the calculations became 10^{23} times more complex...
I *tried*. I tried to get you out before... from the beginning...
...I tried to save you...

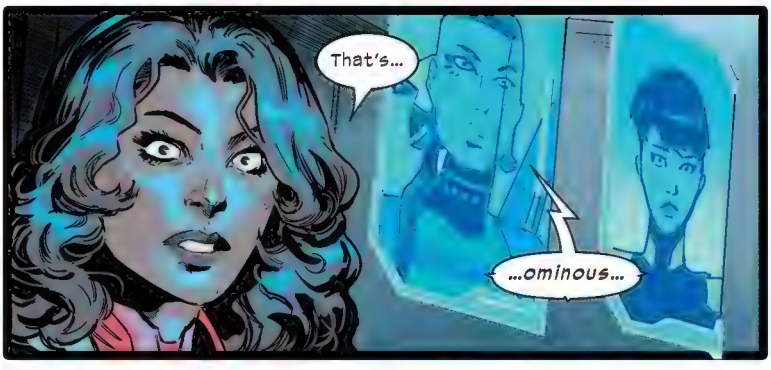
But even with a *time machine,* I ran out of time.
Everything I touch...all doomed...
I miscalculated. Again.
It won't work without you. None of it works without *all* of us.
Okay...
I had to save you. Even if it meant risking...
Doom... it's okay.
It is not "okay," Anthony.
Nothing is okay.
Don't you see it's *not working?* We haven't made enough progress. Not *close.*
We're running out of time!

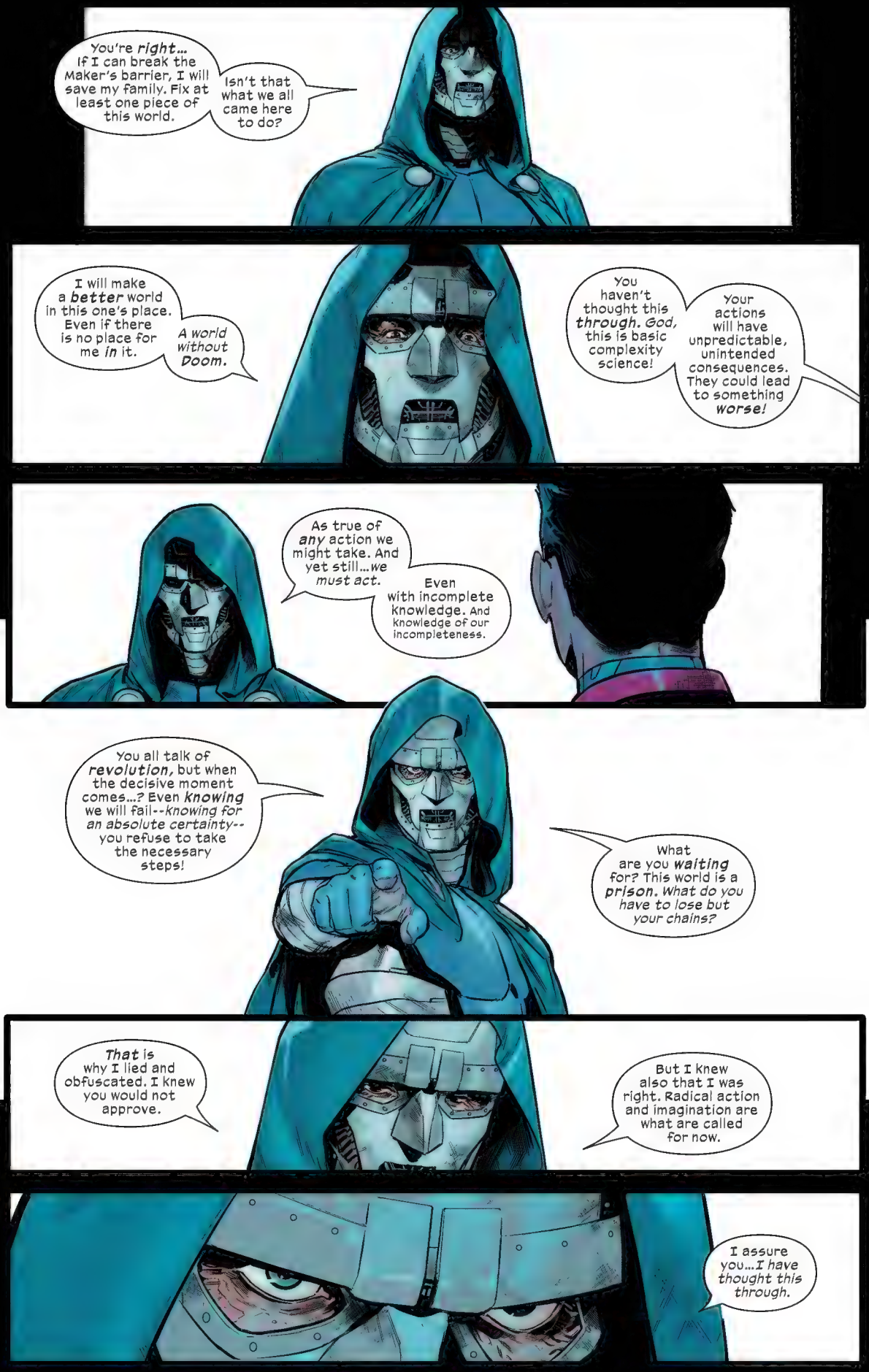

We have credible intelligence from the far future that we have *already* lost. *America*...
He's right.

I've seen it myself--and I'm *sure* it was real.
Don't ask me how. I'm...just sure.


The engine lets you see into the past...what about the future? Can you *confirm?*
I've been *trying*... Everything after the City opens up is just...

...white.


That's...
...ominous...


You're right... If I can break the Maker's barrier, I will save my family. Fix at least one piece of this world.
Isn't that what we all came here to do?
I will make a better world in this one's place. Even if there is no place for me in it.
A world without Doom.
You haven't thought this through. God, this is basic complexity science!
Your actions will have unpredictable, unintended consequences. They could lead to something worse!
As true of any action we might take. And yet still...we must act.
Even with incomplete knowledge. And knowledge of our incompleteness.
You all talk of revolution, but when the decisive moment comes...? Even knowing we will fail--knowing for an absolute certainty--you refuse to take the necessary steps!
What are you waiting for? This world is a prison. What do you have to lose but your chains?
That is why I lied and obfuscated. I knew you would not approve.
But I knew also that I was right. Radical action and imagination are what are called for now.
I assure you...I have thought this through.

Okay.
..."Okay"?
Okay. I believe you. And I trust you.
You... do?
I didn't call everyone here to put you on trial. I just thought we needed to get everything out into the open. So we could decide on the future of this thing.
Together.
Cap? What do you think about all this?

Doom's right.
Huh!
Really?
I was not expecting that.
I...
I agree with you. This isn't working.
I expected a pointless *fight.*
But I don't think trying to break through the barrier is any better.
If you haven't cracked it by now, there's no guarantee you'll crack it in the next six months. And six months is what we've got.
That's before getting into the ethics of killing trillions...
And Tony, the "origin boxes" are ***also*** a failed concept. I stand by that.
But what we're doing now isn't working ***either.*** We don't need ominous visions of the future, or potential pasts, to see what's in front of our ***faces.***
We are no match for what's already here, much less what's coming when the City opens.

The Ultimates have been scattered, fractured and disoriented. And I blame myself.
I've been thinking small. Like a *soldier*, instead of a...
...instead of what we *need*.
The truth is, *America Chavez* and *Mr. Cage* have been much more effective than I have. We could all learn a lot from them.
Oh, uh...
I could recommend some reading materials...
We need more active outreach. We need to expand the network. *Rapidly.*
We need to give them something to *fight* for.
What do *you* give them?
Something to *die* for, if need be.

But I don't want something to die for...
And we must use the Immortus Engine to its full potential. It is our greatest weapon.
"We'll have to think in four dimensions if we want to save the world," huh?
Four at least.
Well, the truth is, I've already started thinking about possibilities--
You're already making the same mistakes! It can't just be you or Doom or Steve making decisions this time.
For this to work, we'll need everyone's ideas. We have to try everything to save everything.
One of you will be responsible for untold suffering and the death of trillions...
...and the other could save everything.
I... America is right. We...we can't trust ourselves.
I mean, we can't entrust the future to any three of us.

So from here on out, we pool perspectives and ideas. Find ways to combine expertise and enhance our approaches.
Nothing is *forbidden.* Everything is *possible.*
"We're going to fix the world."
ULTIMATES V.2.0
Top down didn't work. Let's try *bottom up.*
ULTIMATES V.2.0
Okay...then I guess it's *unanimous.* The Ultimates 2.0 is hereby *dissolved.*
ULTIMATES V.3.0
Let's make sure the next one's better.
So...who wants to go *first?*
"All dead, *huh?* Shame it didn't *stick.*"

Present company excluded, of course.
Listen, Fury, you made assurances--
Then rest assured. I'm a man of my word.
When the time comes--and the time will come--
--you and your husband will be spared, Mrs. Van Dyne.
So long as you tell us everything, you have my personal guarantee.
Now you better get back, before Hank misses you. We've put groceries in your car, for your alibi.
Try the feta dip. I hear it's good.
And hey... thank you for participating in H.A.N.D.'s informant program.
We'll be in touch.
SIX MONTHS REMAINING...

ULTIMATE UNIVERSE: ONE YEAR IN VARIANT BY
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ULTIMATE UNIVERSE: ONE YEAR IN VARIANT BY
FRANK MILLER & **ALEX SINCLAIR**

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ULTIMATES #7 ULTIMATE SPECIAL VARIANT BY
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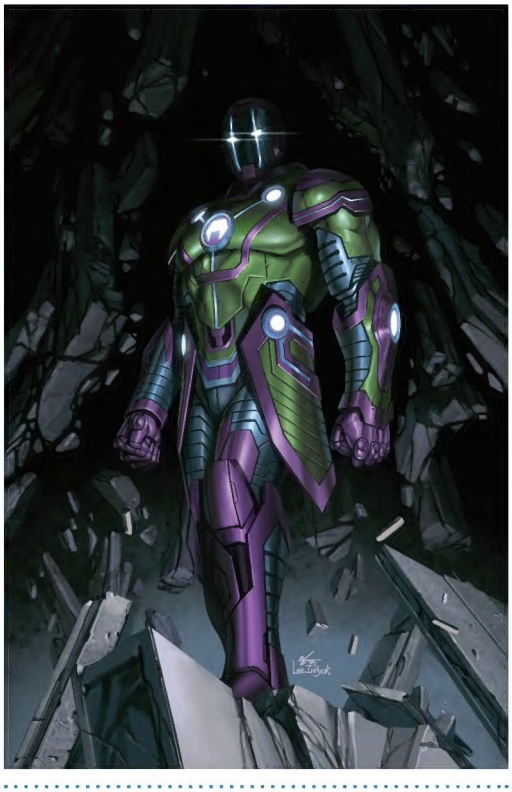

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MARVEL ULTIMATE

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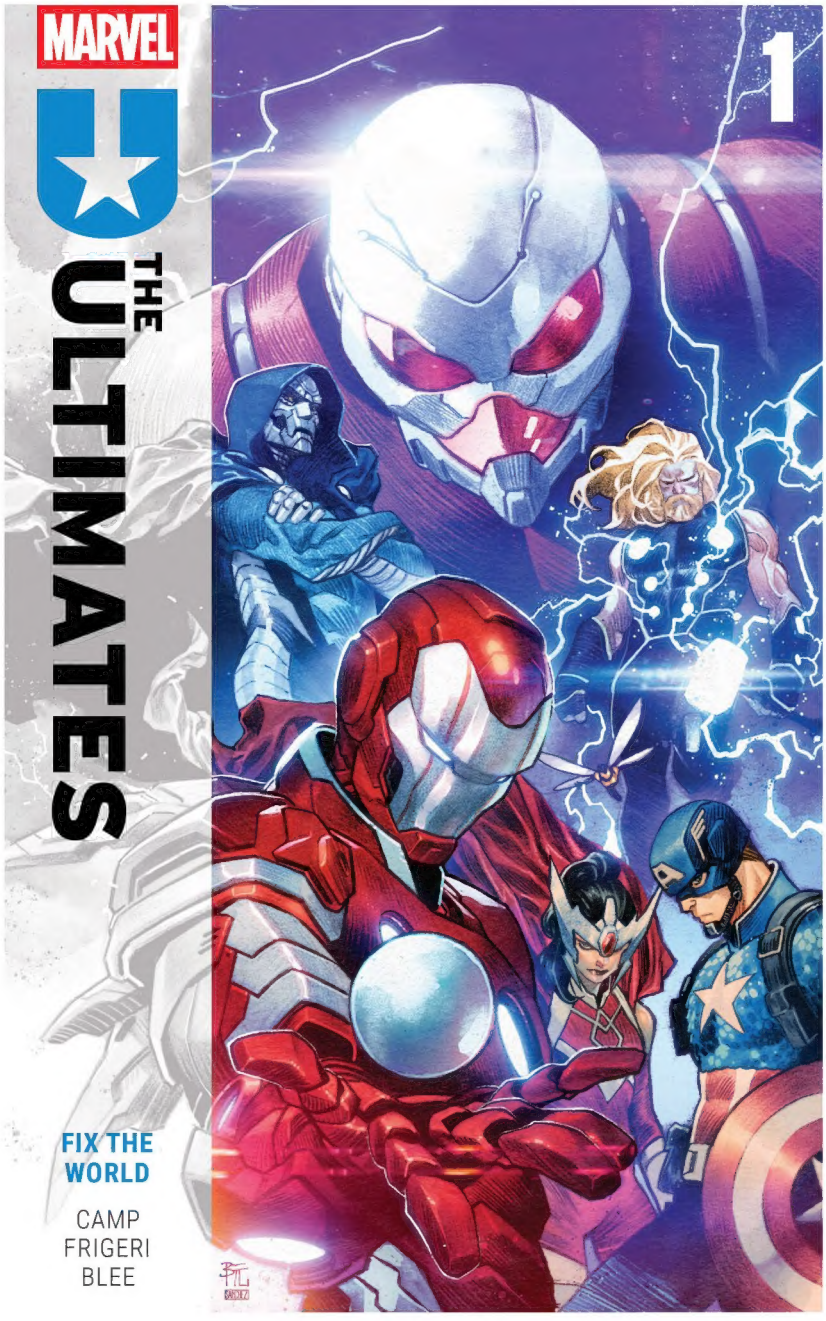

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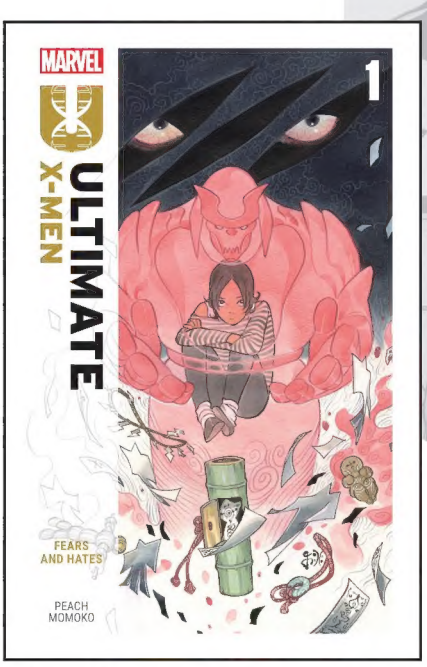

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